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*Manitoba
October 2000*

OFFICE OF THE
PROVINCIAL AUDITOR

*An Examination of
School Board
Governance in
Manitoba*

As a leader in promoting enhanced accountability of government to the citizens of Manitoba, the Office of the Provincial Auditor will contribute to greater public trust and confidence in the institutions of government.



Vision

As a leader in promoting enhanced accountability of government to the citizens of Manitoba, the Office of the Provincial Auditor will contribute to greater public trust and confidence in the institutions of government.

Mission

To contribute to effective governance by the Manitoba Legislature, we provide the Members of the Legislative Assembly with independent assurance and advice on:

government accountability information;

compliance with legislative authorities; and

the operational performance of government.

Values

IN RELATIONSHIP WITH SOCIETY

Public *Accountability*
Integrity *Openness*

IN RELATIONSHIP WITH OUR INSTITUTIONS

Efficiency
Independence
Balanced Perspectives
Professional Excellence

**Office of the Provincial Auditor**

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October 2000

The Honourable Peter M. Liba
Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba
Room 235, Legislative Building
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R3C 0V8

Dear Sir:

I have the honour to submit herewith our October 2000 report on An Examination of School Board Governance in Manitoba to be laid before Members of the Legislative Assembly in accordance with the provisions of Section 13 of The Provincial Auditor's Act.

Respectfully submitted,

Jon W. Singleton, CA, CISA

PROVINCIAL AUDITOR



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In 1998, I began a dialogue with Manitobans about board governance in the public sector. At that time board members of 29 Manitoba Crown organizations provided their input into what makes an effective board. Our report raised a number of questions which we encouraged board members to consider.

This report, part of a planned series of governance reports, extends the dialogue to the education sector vis-à-vis school board governance.

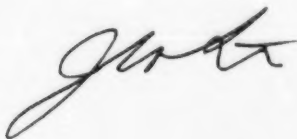
There are two issues raised in the report that I would like to emphasize here.

The first is, "How can a school board know whether it is effective?" Trustees have self-assessed a significant performance gap. That is, in almost all cases, they assessed their performance to fall substantially short of desired performance. I encourage school boards to consider their effectiveness as part of an ongoing pursuit of excellence.

The second issue is the need to address the feeling apparent in the survey that school boards and the Department of Education & Training are not communicating as effectively as they might. I encourage all parties affected by this perception to explore the issue with a view to developing practical steps to ensure that the Department and school boards are pursuing a compatible set of objectives.

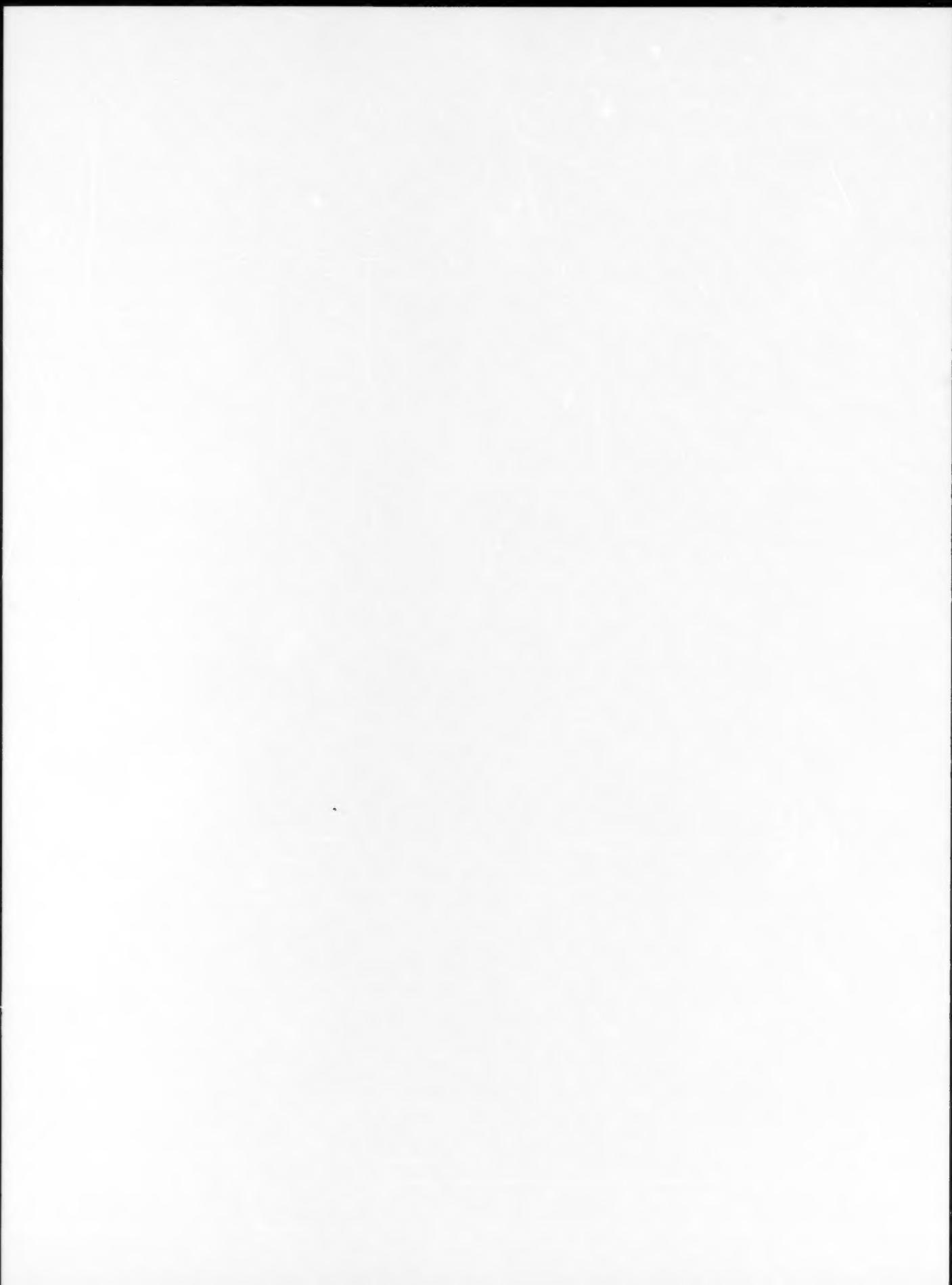
I would like to thank the 306 school trustees and superintendents who responded to the survey for taking the time to provide their input on such an important issue. It was clear from the survey that they are committed to providing Manitobans with the highest quality of education.

I encourage all school boards and their administrations to examine the findings presented in this report. It may well be appropriate to take some time periodically to discuss the implications of the findings in each group's unique environment. I look forward to many future opportunities to discuss governance issues with Manitobans.



Jon W. Singleton, CA, CISA





Report Overview: A Dialogue on School Board Governance

OUR PURPOSE

There has been a general recognition in Canada that effective governance in public sector organizations is an important contributor to the well being of our communities.

As Provincial Auditor, I believe that effective governance is a key component to ensuring that the citizens of Manitoba are well served by their public institutions. Consistent with our vision of contributing to greater public trust and confidence in the institutions of government, my Office began a dialogue on improving governance by producing a 1998 Report to the Legislative Assembly that examined the board governance practices of 29 Crown corporations and Crown agencies within the government reporting entity.* The interest and ongoing discussion generated by that report confirms that the citizens of Manitoba have a strong interest in issues of governance.

*Our June 1998 report entitled, *An Examination of Governance in Manitoba's Crown Organizations*, is available on our website (www.pao.mb.ca) or by calling our Office at (204) 945-3790.

These considerations led our Office to begin a series of governance reviews in various areas of Manitoba's public sector. Our purpose in conducting these studies is:

- to gain an improved understanding of the state of board governance in Manitoba;
- to foster a dialogue around improving public sector board governance practices.

This report, the second in our series, examines the governance practices of public school boards in Manitoba. Our review of school boards begins with a Model of Governance developed by our Office, which provides a "picture" of an effective board. Using this Model, we conducted a survey of all public school boards in Manitoba that sought the opinions of elected trustees, as well as each school division/district's superintendent, on how well their school boards perform on each attribute of the Model.

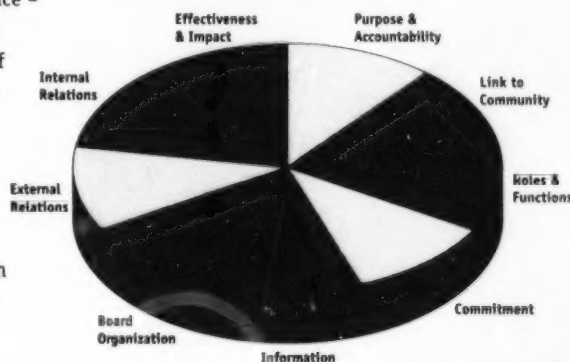
Our main report provides the detailed findings of our survey. This overview highlights the contribution of each attribute to effective governance and provides key findings from each section of the main report. It also raises a series of questions based on the anomalies reported between current school board practices and the Model. We hope that this will foster a dialogue among those interested in the education sector to further enhance the effectiveness of school board governance in Manitoba.

OUR MODEL OF GOVERNANCE

The Model of Governance upon which our governance reviews are based incorporates best practices and leading perspectives in board governance research. **Attributes of an Effective Board**

Drawing on the four pillars of good governance – Stewardship, Leadership, Responsibility and Accountability – our Model identifies a set of nine attributes that represent the attributes of an effective board. We believe that, in general, the more a board fulfils each of these attributes, the more effective it is.

Using this Model, our Office developed a survey for Manitoba's public school boards on the applicability of these attributes to their governance practices. The survey was



designed to provide an overall picture of governance among the 54 public school boards in Manitoba, not to focus on any particular board, nor issue of educational policy. We surveyed the opinions of all trustees and superintendents in Manitoba during May/June 2000 and received 306 completed questionnaires; a response rate of 62%.

OUR SURVEY FINDINGS

Our survey found strong support among trustees and superintendents for the attributes of our Model of Governance. Their endorsement provides a basis upon which to review and deepen our knowledge of school board governance practices in Manitoba.

The following sections discuss the contribution of each attribute to effective governance and the key findings from the main report. A series of questions are raised based on these findings. We encourage all school boards to reflect upon these questions and assess their applicability to their particular board environment.

Attribute #1 - Are School Boards Clear on Their Purpose and Their Accountability?

A shared aim is vital for effective governance. By holding a purpose in common, a set of individuals coalesces into a group, a team, a community — the board. Given that formal goals are often vague, debating the goals and identifying shared priorities are two of the key activities that enable a board to add meaning to the shared aim. Effective governance requires significant time and attention be paid to organizational vision, mission, goals and priorities.

Trustees and superintendents report that they clearly understand the mandate and goals of their school division/district, and that they have taken adequate steps to develop their objectives and priorities. However, there was some difference of opinion between trustees and superintendents as to whether school boards adequately assess the risks involved in meeting their goals and the extent to which specific performance goals are identified by the board on an annual basis.

Associated with the right to act is the responsibility to be accountable for what is accomplished. Being responsible for direction and accountable for actions situates the board as the ultimate authority for the school division/district. While trustees agree the school board is the ultimate authority for the school division/district, they perceive that governance responsibility is shared. In fact, they assign only about 45% of total governance responsibility to themselves. Therefore, more than half the responsibility was perceived by trustees to rest with other education partners and stakeholders, most especially their administration. Interestingly enough, the Minister and the Department of Education & Training, was only assigned 12% of that responsibility. This perception of shared governance appears to be inconsistent with a board's ultimate responsibility for governance. Our 1998 review of corporate boards found a similar inconsistency. The consequence of this perception of shared governance is unknown.

Trustees told us that they accept their obligation for accountability and they feel they have been given the proper authorities to operate their school division/district effectively. While trustees also indicated they were clear on the board's accountabilities, it was noted that school boards are accountable to a large number of groups, which have potentially conflicting views. Further, there was some indication that the government's expectations for board accountability may need to be more clearly defined.

Reporting is an extremely important part of accountability. While the majority of trustees feel that their school board is doing an adequate job of meeting their requirements, they also indicated some concern as to whether the accountability information provided allows the public and government to properly evaluate divisional performance.

How can school boards more effectively identify performance goals and adequately assess the risks involved in achieving them?

What can be done to more clearly define the government's expectations for school board accountability?

How can school boards improve accountability reporting to enable the public to properly evaluate divisional performance?

Attribute #2 - How Clear is the Linkage of the School Board to its Community?

Board legitimacy comes in part from it being comprised of individuals who represent the appropriate community and who have the appropriate mix of knowledge and skills. As trustees are elected to their school board, they are seen to be representative of their community. Hence, it is reasonable to expect that trustees reflect the desires, needs, values and perspectives of that community. Clarity as to whom trustees represent and on whose behalf they act is a fundamental component of effective school board governance.

Trustees and superintendents do not perceive a strong gap between the characteristics that trustees should bring to the board and the extent to which these are actually represented on their board. Knowledge of government and business acumen were viewed to be the most important characteristics a trustee could bring to their school board. Interestingly enough, having prior school board experience and/or related education experience were not seen to be important to effective school board governance. Further, political affiliation and representing special interest groups were viewed to be of almost no importance. Trustees and superintendents indicated that each of these latter characteristics is more strongly represented on current school boards than is required.

When asked whose interests they primarily represent on their school board, trustees overwhelmingly indicated the students of their school division/district. Given that trustees have the power to levy taxes, it is interesting to note that the interests of the taxpayers of their community was ranked third in importance. Representing the interests of the Department of Education & Training and the provincial government was considered to be of least importance.

What other skills or experience would further enhance school board governance?

What can be done to ensure that an appropriate balance of interests is represented on school boards?

Attribute #3 - What are the School Board's Responsibilities and Functions?

The board job is comprised of a set of roles and associated functions. In addition to the role of ultimate authority, the board is also expected to act as constructive critic of, and advocate for, their organization. Each of these three board roles has different expectations associated with it: when one is an advocate, one is celebrating the contributions of the organization to the community; when one is a constructive critic, one is examining that which the organization has actually accomplished or is proposing to accomplish; when one is the ultimate authority, one is concerned with mandate and accountability. These roles can require quite different mindsets and behaviours. As what is required in one role may conflict with another, it is important for a board to be clear on which role is being performed at any given time.

Both trustees and superintendents indicate that school boards in Manitoba are clear on their roles and associated functions. They also report that the board job of performing these functions is a manageable one. However, when asked to assess their board's performance on each of these functions, both trustees and superintendents report a significant performance gap. In almost all functions, both trustees and superintendents assessed their board's actual performance to fall substantively short of desired performance. Further, it is worth noting that the largest performance gap was seen to exist in those functions that were deemed to be of most critical importance to effective governance: setting strategic direction and goals; monitoring the achievement of those goals; ensuring accountability functions are discharged; evaluating the performance of the superintendent; and developing communication plans.

How can school boards improve their performance on the board functions deemed to be most important?

Attribute #4 - What Level of Commitment do Trustees give to their School Board Responsibilities?

Effective board governance requires commitment. Members of any board need to commit both individually and as a group to the goals of the organization and the processes set in place for the board to achieve them. Board governance literature often assumes that board members will give to their board all the time and energy that is needed for good governance. This assumption may not accurately reflect that the part-time position of board member may conflict with other salient roles (that of full-time career, wife/husband, parent, etc.). Moreover, it does not recognize the composition of the board as a group, in which some members may not see that their contribution of time and energy makes a difference, and thus, may leave the actual work of governance to others.

Overall, trustees indicated that they are highly committed to their school division/district and care about their school board's contribution to their community. They want to do a good job. Absenteeism at board meetings is not reported to be a problem. Although less than half the trustees indicated that the stipend paid adequately compensates for their involvement, the vast majority of trustees perceive their board role and contribution to be "worth it".

Trustees indicated they devote considerable time and energy to their school board; on average, about 26 hours per month. Less than half the trustees indicated they knew this would be the case prior to their election. Even given this large time commitment, an expectation exists that more is required, as over 40% of Trustees reported that their fellow board members are not devoting the necessary time to do an adequate job.

Attribute #5 - Do School Boards Have the Information Needed To Make Decisions?

Information is a key contributor to effective board decisions. Board members have a duty to demand and expect quality information on a timely basis for decision-making. Information is often assumed to be neutral and unbiased; it is not. Information is developed and perceived through particular views and paradigms. It is generally prepared for a specific purpose that needs to be kept in mind when interpreting it. Two major strategies are used to counteract these limitations with information. The first is to involve several people in a decision. Thus, through the various individuals on a board, different perspectives are brought together in decision-making, which balances the sole perspective of any one decision-maker. The second is to have more than one source of information. Multiple sources of information may serve to counteract any distortion that exists in a single source.

Our study found that trustees perceive the information provided to them to be adequate, appropriate, and useful for decision-making. Information is pre-circulated in sufficient time and few trustees found the volume of material to be overwhelming.

Trustees are generally pleased with the information being provided to them by their administration. Sole reliance on internal sources of information does not appear to be an issue, as most trustees state that they use external sources to provide information, independent of the administration. Further, about 70% of trustees indicate that they have asked for information beyond that originally provided to the board.

Trustees were less satisfied with the information provided to them from the Department of Education & Training. Only about a third of trustees indicated that such information was appropriate and that it was provided on a timely enough basis for decision-making.

How can the work of the school board be structured so as to achieve a reasonable balance between the trustees' need to commit time and energy to board work and to their other priorities?

What can be done to ensure that trustees consistently receive quality information on a timely basis for decision-making?

Attribute #6 - Are School Boards Organized to Do the Job?

To do its job effectively, boards need to be well organized with the appropriate processes and structures in place to accomplish its goals. Further, an appropriate board culture, one in which the members feel free to participate and contribute, must be established to ensure the board works well together.

Trustees and superintendents report that school boards in Manitoba clearly understand their job and that, in general, school boards work well together as a team. Our survey indicated that trustees and superintendents perceive their board culture to be a good one, as almost all trustees agreed that they have the opportunity to express their views at board meetings and that there is good participation by all. Further, almost all trustees indicated they feel comfortable taking an opposing view from other board members. Even so, most school boards indicated they were able to resolve conflicting positions on the board.

Structurally, trustees and superintendents report that their school boards are well organized to do the job required and that the number of school board meetings held per year is sufficient for their board to be effective. Chairpersons were generally reported to be doing a good job of facilitating meetings. Trustees and superintendents also report that the appropriate board committees have been established and that the committees are doing a good job overall. While trustees generally felt confident that there is little confusion between the authority of the board and the authority of its committees, superintendents were somewhat more reserved as to the extent of clarity on these authorities.

Attribute #7 - How Do School Boards Relate to Government?

A board never operates in isolation. While a board is independent and autonomous, it is also interdependent with its community and the context within which it operates. There is a need for all boards to understand their environment and the other actors, stakeholders, and competitors in the system. Key external relationships for any board includes its clients, its funders, any partnerships or service providers, as well as the public.

Public sector boards are especially impacted by their relationship with government. They may be dependent on government for resources, and may be required to take direction from government and/or implement policy directives and standards as specified by government. The ultimate authority a board has for its organization can be impacted if its relationship with government is not carefully managed. Balancing this interdependence, with the independence of the board, is a vital aspect of effective school board governance.

Our survey found a complex and confused relationship between Manitoba's school boards and the provincial government. Both trustees and superintendents report that the relationship between school boards and government has deteriorated in recent years. More than a third of trustees and over half of superintendents do not believe government has provided their school board with a consistent message about its expectations. Further, more than half the trustees and even more superintendents indicated the government's long-term goals to improve education are not clear to them.

Trustees and superintendents clearly indicated that improvement needs to be made in the relationship with government. Only a third of trustees agreed that the vision, mission and operations of their school division/district were aligned with those of government. The majority of trustees and superintendents indicated that the policy initiatives of government are sometimes incompatible with divisional objectives. They report as well, their belief that school boards have been unfairly held accountable for decisions made by government.

Although trustees report school boards are well organized, their response under Attribute 3 indicated that board performance is below desired levels. What can be done to address this performance gap?

How can school boards enhance the clarity of board committee authorities?

What can be done to strengthen the relationship between school boards and the provincial government? How can the goals of each be brought into closer alignment?

*As our survey questionnaire was developed based on a unitary system of administration, only the relationship between the school board and the superintendent was assessed. It should be noted, however, that a small number of school boards in Manitoba have a dual-track system, where the secretary-treasurer also reports directly to the board and is equivalent to the superintendent. Due to the limitations of our survey, the relationship between the board and secretary-treasurer was not assessed in any way. This is not intended to imply that the unitary system is the only, nor the preferred, administrative option for school boards.

How can the lines of authority between school boards and their superintendents be further clarified?

What are the implications of allowing the board's residual authority to rest with the superintendent?

Trustees and superintendents were generally unsatisfied with the current level of communication and co-ordination that exists between their school boards and government. Insufficient co-ordination was reported and the consultative processes between government and school boards were viewed to be ineffective. As a result, most suggestions for improving the relationship with government dealt with increasing consultation and improving communication processes.

Attribute #8 - How do School Boards Relate to their Superintendent?

The relationship between a school board and its superintendent is one of the most important internal relationships for the board.* The superintendent acts, in most cases, as the main conduit of information between the administration and the board. S/he generally sits at the apex of the administration's management team, and is responsible for implementing the board's decisions. While the Trustee's position is part-time and for a specified term, the superintendent's position is full time, permanent and the source of professional prestige and livelihood. As such, the superintendent is a key contributor to the school division/district's success.

While the board, as ultimate authority, hires and evaluates the superintendent, the superintendent accrues power from greater knowledge of the functioning of the division/district, from his/her awareness of its history, and through peer relationships built over time. It is therefore important that there be clarity in the allocation and sharing of power and authority between a school board and its superintendent. The board form of governance assumes that, as the board has ultimate authority, any authorities not specifically delegated by the board are retained by the board. If, over time, these residual authorities are perceived to automatically fall to the authority of the superintendent, an erosion in the board form of governance may occur.

Trustees and superintendents indicate that their working relationship is a strong, collegial one. Trustees have a high regard for the superintendent's role and they share a common set of priorities. The lines of authority between school boards and their superintendent have generally been clarified, though about 20% of trustees and superintendents indicated that some improvements could occur.

In the working relationship, trustees and superintendents perceive authority to be shared between them. The majority of trustees and superintendents indicated that the superintendent shares responsibility with the board for the school division/district's effectiveness. Further, more than three-quarters of trustees indicated that any authorities not specifically those of the board fall to the superintendent. Superintendents agreed with this observation. Hence, for many trustees, residual authority is automatically accorded to the superintendent. This is a similar situation to that reported in our 1998 corporate governance study.

Attribute #9 - How Effective Are School Boards in Manitoba?

Determining the effectiveness of a board has been the subject of much research. As no objective indicators of effectiveness have been developed, the standard approach is to ask board members to self-assess their effectiveness. The limitation with this approach is that it is strictly a value-judgement made by those directly involved. Research studies indicate that people, in making such value-judgements of their own effectiveness, are largely overconfident.

To move beyond such self-assessments of effectiveness, our Model of Governance looks at how a board actually impacts, or makes a difference to, the organization for which it is responsible. While some board evaluations look to policy generation as a measure of impact, we did not feel that this policy perspective provides a unique activity upon which to assess board effectiveness, as many different parts of an organization are involved in the development and implementation of policy. Boards do, however, specifically make decisions. Hence, our Model of Governance defines the

board's service to its organization, or its output, as its decisions. The impact of these decisions on the organization is deemed to be the desired outcome of the board.

Trustees and superintendents perceive that they are effective at what they do and they report that Manitoba's school boards are carrying out their responsibilities effectively. To further explore this assessment, our survey examined the trustees' perception of the quality of their school board's decisions, as well as the perceived outcome or impact of those decisions.

Trustees and superintendents report that their school board's decision-making is productive and efficient. The quality of debate on matters before the board is reported to be effective and decisions are not perceived to be reconsidered too often. Board decision-making is not perceived to be hampered by trustees' knowledge and understanding of issues, but some concern appears to exist with trustees who represent special interests on the school board.

While trustees and superintendents indicate a high quality of decision-making, the impact of those decisions on the school division/district is perceived to be somewhat more limited. About a quarter of trustees and one in five superintendents indicated a concern that their school board acts as a "rubber stamp" for conclusions reached by the administration. While strongly agreeing that school boards should, as necessary, change the recommendations made to it by staff, only about a third of trustees agreed that they do make such changes. In fact, a third of trustees and over half the superintendents indicated that they do not.

Trustees and superintendents agree that it is important for school boards to take the time to review and assess their effectiveness. It is not clear, however, that this often occurs. While trustees and superintendents report that they are clear on desired outcomes, almost a third of trustees and half the superintendents state that objective measures to evaluate their board have not been established. Rather, trustees generally believe that their school boards are effective if their division/district's programs are effective. However, it is our belief that board effectiveness should be differentiated from organizational effectiveness and it should not be assumed that a board is effective when its organization achieves success, nor conversely, that a board is ineffective if its organization experiences difficulties. Distinguishing school board effectiveness from divisional performance necessitates that a school board be clear on its desired outcomes and that it establish objective measures to evaluate the board's unique contribution.

A CLOSING COMMENTARY

The significant response to our survey and the time taken by many trustees and superintendents to raise additional issues, indicates the importance they attach to enhancing the effectiveness of school board governance. The survey revealed much that is positive in the operation of school boards and identified a number of areas where further attention is warranted.

Effective governance in any public sector organization takes hard work and sustained effort. The Model of Governance presented in this report outlines a number of attributes for effective governance. However, there is no "one size fits all" solution for effective governance. Rather, the Model should be used as a starting point for board discussions around best practices and practical solutions that suit each board's unique situation.

We hope that this report provides a basis for a vibrant dialogue on enhancing school board governance practices. We encourage all school boards in Manitoba to begin that discussion around their board table by considering the findings presented in this report that most relate to them. We further encourage all Manitobans interested in school board governance to contribute to this dialogue and to assist trustees in enhancing the contribution that effective school boards can make to our community. As Provincial Auditor, I look forward to joining in that dialogue.

What can be done to ensure that school boards sustain a dialogue on how to assess their own performance and their unique contribution to their school division/district? What objective measures of effectiveness would be the most practical to use?

Our Purpose

There has been a general recognition in Canada that effective governance in public sector organizations is an important contributor to the well being of our communities.

Recent private sector board scandals, such as the collapse of Bre-X Minerals and the securities violations at RT Capital, have made headlines and have caused Canadians to question once again whether our current approaches to corporate governance are as effective as desired.

It is important to note that the public sector is not immune to failures in its governance practices. As a result, legislative auditors throughout Canada have been encouraging the review and enhancement of public sector board governance practices.

As Provincial Auditor, I believe that effective governance is a key component to ensuring that the citizens of Manitoba are well served by their public institutions. Consistent with our vision of contributing to greater public trust and confidence in the institutions of government, my Office began a dialogue on improving governance by producing a 1998 Report to the Legislative Assembly that examined the board governance practices of 29 Crown corporations and Crown agencies within the government reporting entity. The interest and ongoing discussion generated by that report confirms that the citizens of Manitoba have a strong interest in issues of governance.

These considerations led our Office to begin a series of governance reviews in various areas of Manitoba's public sector. Our purpose in conducting these studies is:

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Our Model of Governance

Governance is a process of transformation, with people working together in specified relationships to enable effective decision-making. With its focus on the responsibilities and actions of the governing bodies, governance involves:

- Setting direction
 - the aim toward which a board steers itself and its organization.
- People working together
 - board members exercising and expressing their attitudes, beliefs and value systems on matters pertaining to the mandate of the organization.
- Structure and processes
 - the formal means used to achieve the aim, and to direct and manage an organization's operations and activities.

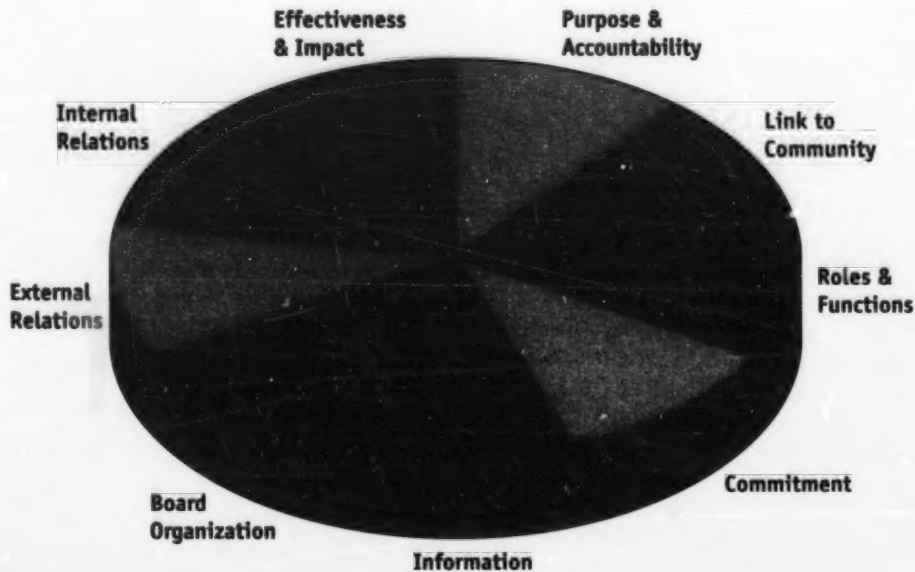
A literature review of leading practices reveals a number of models and approaches for governance, all of which build upon the four pillars of good governance:

- **Stewardship** - As stewards, boards act for others, have authority over their organization, and are trustees of the organization's mandate as well as its resources. A board therefore is sovereign and has ultimate authority for its organization. As a result of this stewardship, a public sector board needs to honour the trust citizens have placed in it.
- **Leadership** - Governance fulfils a leadership function in society. As leaders, boards are expected to reflect the value system and priorities of the community from which they are drawn. Through the board, individuals accept the challenge to develop positive relationships, ensure respect between parties, and build a sense of belonging in the group. Leadership is about the relationship between the governors and those governed.
- **Responsibility** - Having a fiduciary responsibility, boards are expected to manage the resources of the organization efficiently and effectively to accomplish the desired aim. Board members are expected to be reliable, and to allow appropriate factors and considerations to affect their judgement, including consideration of the effect of their choices on others. They are also expected to devote the personal time and energy to ensure that governance is appropriate and adequate.
- **Accountability** - Boards are ultimately accountable for the actions of their organization. Accountability is the responsibility to answer for the discharge of responsibilities conferred and that affect others in important ways. It requires that boards understand who is responsible for what, what performance is to be achieved, and what information needs to be shared to ensure appropriate decision-making.

Within these four pillars, there is a core perspective on what it is that a board should do. Drawing on this, and based upon a review of leading research, perspectives and practices of board governance, we identified a set of nine attributes that operationalize each of the four pillars and incorporate both a structural and behavioural perspective to board governance. These nine attributes represent the attributes of an effective board; our Model of Governance (see Figure 1). We believe that, in general, the more a board fulfils each of these attributes, the more effective it is.

FIGURE 1

Attributes of an Effective Board



Our Model of Governance was first introduced in a June 1998 Report to the Legislative Assembly entitled, *An Examination of Governance in Manitoba's Crown Organizations*. That report presented the perspectives of the Boards of Directors of 29 of Manitoba's Crown organizations on a variety of issues related to corporate governance. The findings of our 1998 governance study indicated that the attributes of our governance model were strongly supported as reflecting a valid approach to effective board governance.

This report further explores the attributes of the Model in relation to the effective governance of public school boards. This study of public school boards is structured to:

- Firstly, determine whether there is a common understanding of governance, by asking whether trustees and superintendents agree that the nine attributes outlined in our model are valid;
- Secondly, to explore, in-depth, each attribute of the model individually, in order to clarify its contribution to good governance and to assess how well school boards perform on each attribute, in the opinion of trustees and superintendents.

About School Boards In Manitoba

Educational governance in Manitoba is essentially based on the principle of a publicly funded, provincially controlled school system. It is structured to devolve local decision-making to school boards while ensuring that the Minister of Education retains overall authority on matters of educational policy. Essentially, the role of school boards is to provide public schooling within provincial guidelines and to provide a means for local input into the educational system. This arrangement of relatively autonomous school boards, made up of locally elected trustees, ensures a degree of community control over education. School boards are therefore responsible and accountable to both the Minister of Education and to their local communities.

Under the *Public Schools Act* (1987), school boards are responsible for most of the administration of schools, including the hiring of teachers and staff, the maintenance of school buildings and property, the provision of student textbooks and learning materials, the transportation of students, the development of courses and programs, and the development of procedures for the collection and use of student files. Although much of the responsibility for education has been devolved to school boards under that Act, the Minister of Education retains overall control of education under the *Education Administration Act* (1987).

School divisions/districts are primarily funded by the provincial government, which provides about three-quarters of that funding from a combination of general revenues and the provincial Education Support Levy on property. School boards also have the power to levy property taxes for education within the boundaries of their school division/district. About 35% of the average school board's budget is raised through this local property tax levy.

School boards are supported in carrying out their responsibilities by their school division/district's administration. The administration is generally headed by a superintendent and/or secretary-treasurer, who report directly to the board. It should be noted that a school board has power only as a collective and its authority is solely as a group; no individual trustee has any direct control over the school division/district.

There are 54 public school boards in Manitoba, representing 46 school divisions and 8 school districts. A complete listing is provided in Appendix A. Of these, there is one francophone board, the *Divisione scolaire franco-manitobaine*, which is unique in that it is a non-geographically based school division consisting of all francophone schools in the province.

These 54 school boards serve the approximately 195,000 students enrolled in Manitoba's public school system. There are, in addition, 94 independent schools in Manitoba serving about 13,000 students; these boards were not included in this study.

Our Survey

The survey used in this study was developed by modifying the governance questionnaire used in our 1998 study in order to reflect the roles, responsibilities and practices of public school boards. The survey was designed to provide an overall picture of governance among Manitoba's school boards, not to focus on any particular issue of educational policy, nor any specific subset of boards. As such, the statements on the questionnaire are general in nature, so as to be applicable to as wide a range of boards as possible. To ensure that the questionnaire adequately reflected a school board environment, the questionnaire was reviewed by various experts in the education field (Appendix B).

Two questionnaires were developed: one for elected trustees; the other for the superintendent of each school division/district. The questionnaires were both translated into French and offered to respondents in both official languages.

In order to assure respondents of confidentiality and anonymity, our Office contracted with an independent research firm, Prairie Research Associates Inc. (PRA), to administer the survey. All 54 public school boards in Manitoba were included in the survey, which was administered in May/June 2000. A total of 497 questionnaires were distributed, with 306 completed surveys returned to PRA. This represents an overall response rate of 62%.

This report presents the overall findings for the 260 trustees and 46 superintendents who responded to our survey. The findings deal with the data on an aggregate basis only; no data for individual boards nor for individual respondent is provided. Complete data tables are provided in Appendix C.

All graphs in this report are presented as percentages of respondents who either agreed or agreed strongly with the series of statements posed on the questionnaire. The agreement scale used on the questionnaire ranged from 1 to 5, as follows:

- 1 = Disagree Strongly
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Neutral/Neither
- 4 = Agree
- 5 = Agree Strongly

While every effort was made to ensure the survey adequately addressed all factors, we note the following limitations:

- Only public school boards were included in this study. The boards of independent and/or private schools were not included.
- As our survey questionnaire was developed based on a unitary system of board administration, only one member of each administration, the superintendent, was asked to complete a questionnaire. In most cases, the superintendent is recognized as the primary education and administrative leader of school administrations. However, a number of school boards in Manitoba have a dual-track system of administration, where the role of secretary-treasurer is considered equivalent to the superintendent and both report directly to the board. Due to the limitations of our survey instrument, the special nature of governance in these situations was not explored. This in no way is intended to imply that the unitary system is the only, nor the preferred, administrative option for school boards. We thank those secretary-treasurers who voluntarily completed our survey. As we did not formally survey all secretary-treasurers of each school division/district, it is not appropriate to incorporate these surveys into the overall data; however, their valuable comments were considered in developing this report.

Our Findings

This section of the report presents the perceptions of the 306 trustees and superintendents who responded to our survey on how well, in their opinion, their school board performs on each of the nine attributes of our Model of Governance. The survey examined the Model of Governance in a public school board setting by:

- firstly, confirming the general acceptance of these attributes as being important to the functioning of an effective school board;
- secondly, examining each of the Model's nine attributes individually, in order to clarify the functioning and contribution of each to school board governance.

THE MODEL OF GOVERNANCE: IS THERE A COMMON UNDERSTANDING OF GOVERNANCE IN MANITOBA'S SCHOOL BOARDS?

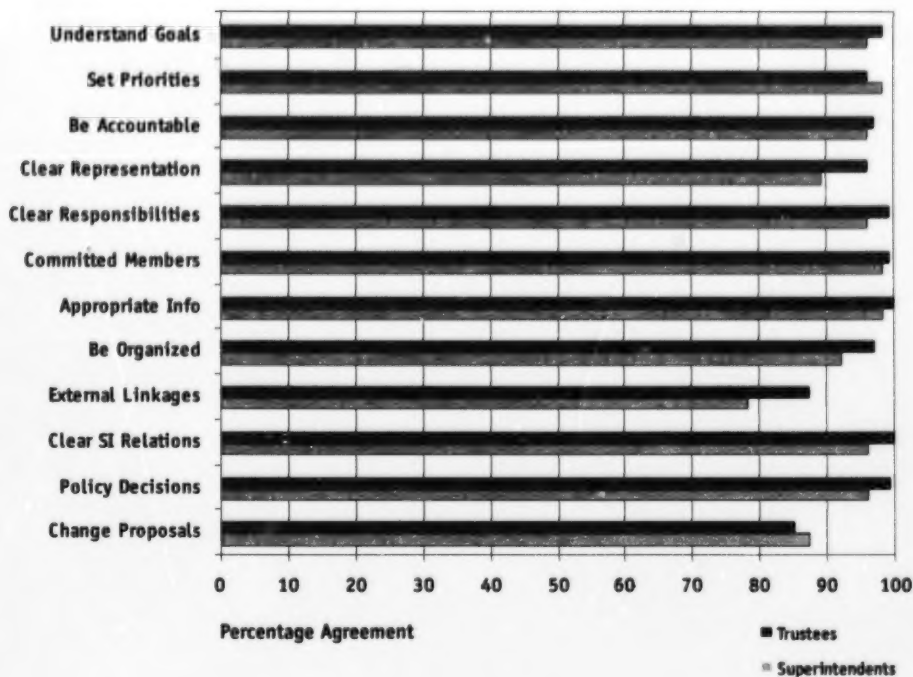
A common understanding of board governance is vital for individuals to work together on a board. We explored the extent to which trustees and superintendents have a common understanding of governance through a series of statements based on our Model of Governance. Together, the statements represent the nine attributes of an effective board. We believe that, in general, the more a board meets each of these attributes, the more effective it is.

Our findings show that the attributes of our model are strongly endorsed by both trustees and superintendents. As shown in Figure 2, trustees and superintendents strongly agreed that an effective school board should:

- Clearly understand the school division/district's goals.
- Set agreed upon priorities for the board.
- Be accountable for the effectiveness of the school division/district.
- Be clear on who it is the board represents.
- Be clear on the board's responsibilities.
- Be comprised of trustees who are committed to the school division/district.
- Have the appropriate information to make decisions.
- Be organized as a board, with appropriate board processes and structures in place.
- Maintain appropriate linkages with external organizations and stakeholders.
- Define clear relations with the Superintendent.
- Make policy decisions for the school division/district.
- As necessary, change the recommendations made to the board by the administration.

FIGURE 2

The Governance Model



All survey respondents agreed with our definition of school board governance as "people working together to set direction and be accountable for a school division/district." Further, there was strong agreement (93%) that effective governance also brings a fiduciary responsibility to manage resources effectively in order to achieve the desired aim.

Based on this common understanding, the attributes of our Model of Governance provide a criteria upon which to assess the performance of these school boards and hence, the state of school board governance in Manitoba. In the following sections, each attribute is explored individually in order to develop a further understanding of their specific functioning and contribution to effective governance.

ATTRIBUTE 1: PURPOSE & ACCOUNTABILITY

A shared aim is vital for effective governance. By holding a purpose in common, a set of individuals coalesces into a group, a team, a community — the board. Effective governance requires significant time and attention be paid to organizational vision, mission, goals and priorities. School boards are responsible for the purpose and direction of their school division/district and are accountable for what is accomplished. As the ultimate authority for their school division/district, a school board has the responsibility to act, and the obligation to answer for those actions. Trustees and superintendents both strongly endorsed this attribute as being an important contributor to an effective school board.

This attribute was further explored by assessing:

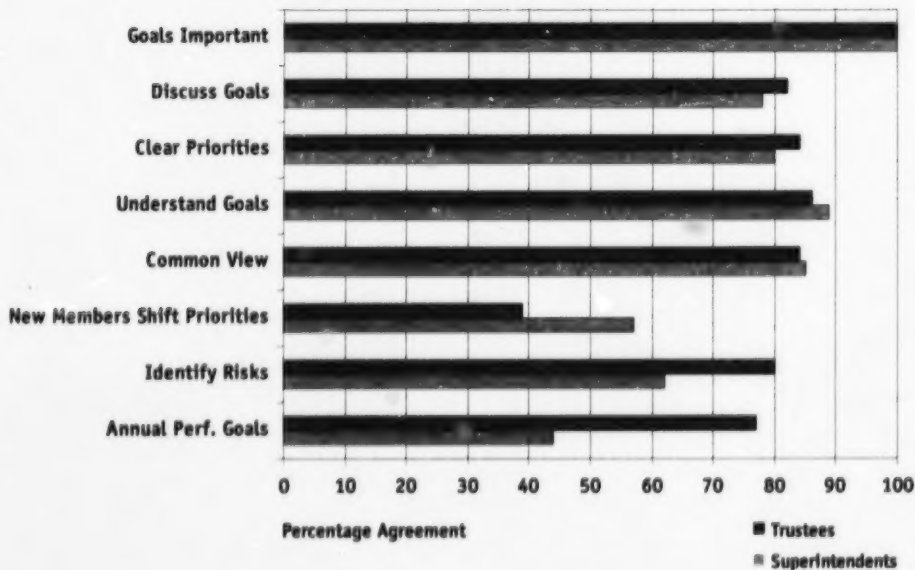
- The extent to which goals are clear and operationalized;
- The board's assessment of its accountability reporting; and
- The board's perception of its ultimate responsibility.

Purpose is set forth in the mandate and mission of an organization. The formal goals associated with the mandate often start out as vague and general in nature, and are clarified as they are discussed and put into practice. Debating the goals and identifying shared priorities are two of the *key activities that enable a board to add meaning to the shared aim. As shown in Figure 3:*

- All trustees and superintendents agreed that the goals of their school division/district are important to them. There was clear indication that school boards discuss their goals and that the priorities for leading their school division/district have been clarified. As a result, more than 8 out of 10 trustees indicated that their school board's goals are clearly understood by all.
- More than 8 out of 10 trustees and superintendents indicated that they share a common view of the school division/district's priorities.
- Changing membership, often a force to shift goals, was seen to have an impact on priorities by almost 40% of trustees. Superintendents even more strongly agreed that changing membership has an impact on their school board's priorities.
- School boards are doing a good job of identifying and assessing the risks involved in meeting their operational goals according to 80% of trustees; however, superintendents were much less likely to agree with this assessment. Further, while more than three-quarters of trustees indicated that their board annually identifies specific performance targets that it expects the school division/district to achieve, only 46% of superintendents agreed that this occurs.

FIGURE 3

Setting Direction/Goals



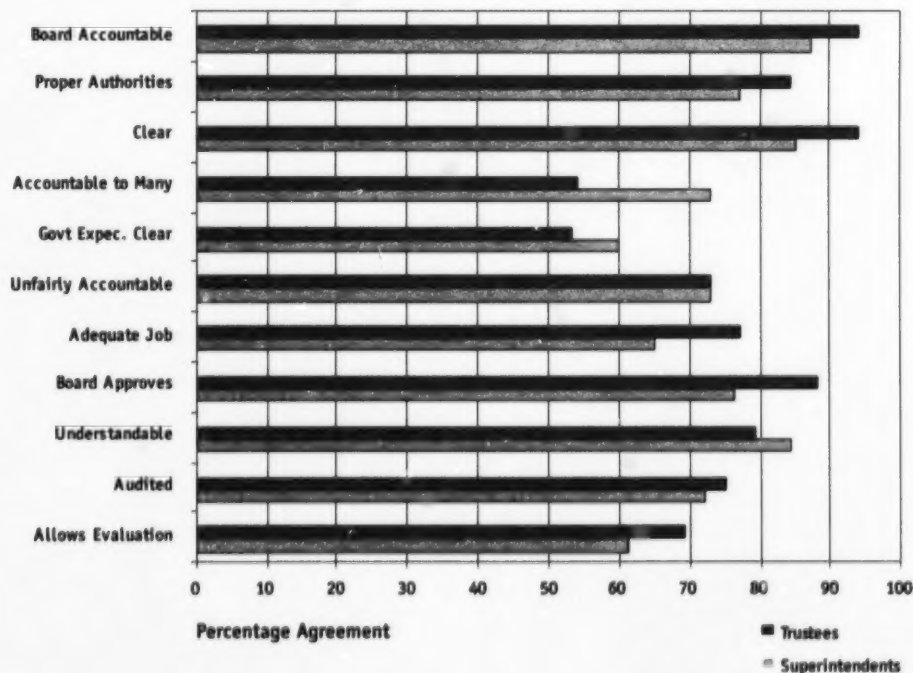
Associated with the right to act is the responsibility to be accountable for what is accomplished. Being responsible for direction and accountable for actions situates the board as the ultimate authority for an organization. As shown in Figure 4:

- Trustees and superintendents strongly accept that school boards are accountable for the actions of their school division/district. Trustees further agreed that school boards have the proper authorities to operate their school division/district effectively; somewhat fewer superintendents felt this to be true.

- Trustees strongly indicated that they are clear on their accountabilities, even though about half the trustees and almost three-quarters of superintendents feel that school boards are accountable to a large number of groups, with potentially conflicting views. Further, only about half the trustees indicated that the expectations between their school board and government have been clearly defined and almost 80% feel that their school board has been held accountable for decisions made by other government bodies.
- About three-quarters of trustees feel that their school board is doing an adequate job of meeting their accountability requirements. All accountability information, including the annual report, is approved by the board. They also ensure that the information is understandable and subject to audit and/or review. However, less than 70% of trustees and even fewer superintendents feel that the accountability information provided adequately allows the public and government to evaluate divisional performance.

FIGURE 4

Accountability



Given that there was no hesitation in indicating that the board is the ultimate authority for the school division, it is interesting that trustees and superintendents do not allocate all governance responsibility to their school board (see Figure 5). In fact, the school board was assigned less than half the overall responsibility. An almost equal amount was allocated to the administration (the superintendent and secretary-treasurer combined) and about 12% of governance responsibility was assigned to the Minister and Department of Education & Training. Thus, the responsibility for governance is perceived to be shared.

FIGURE 5

	Trustees	Superintendents
School Board	44%	42%
Superintendent	25%	22%
Secretary-Treasurer	14%	11%
Minister/Department of Education & Training	12%	13%
Parent Advisory Councils	5%	4%

*SI = Superintendent

ATTRIBUTE 2: RATIONALE AND LINK TO COMMUNITY

Board legitimacy comes in part from it being comprised of individuals who represent their community and have the appropriate mix of knowledge and skills. As trustees are elected to their school board, they are seen to be representative of their community. Hence, it is reasonable to expect that trustees reflect the desires, needs, values and perspectives of that community. This is what forms the link between the governors and those governed. Clarity as to whom board members represent and on whose behalf they act is therefore a fundamental component of effective governance. Trustees and superintendents strongly endorsed this attribute.

The attribute of representation was further explored by assessing:

- The use of values by the board;
- The fit between the characteristics a board should have and what it does have; and
- The board's perception of whose interests are represented.

Trustees strongly endorsed the belief that they are expected to reflect the values and priorities of the community from which they are elected. As well, 77% of trustees and 70% of superintendents indicated that their board has clarified the values and principles that guide their decision-making. As trustees are elected officials, it is assumed that these values are consistent with those of their community.

The fit between characteristics that trustees should and do have was assessed by asking respondents to first indicate how important each characteristic was to an effective school board, and then to assess the extent to which each characteristic was represented on their school board. As shown in Figures 6 and 7:

- In general, trustees and superintendents do not perceive a strong gap between the characteristics that trustees should bring to the board table and the extent to which these are actually represented on their board. Rather, both trustees and superintendents felt that a number of characteristics were more strongly evident on the board than is necessary.
- Knowledge of government and business acumen were considered the most important characteristics for trustees to bring to the board by both trustees and superintendents. Professional expertise (legal, financial, etc.) was also considered somewhat important. Prior experience in education or prior school board experience was not deemed to be essential. Of least importance was representation of special interest groups and known political affiliation. Both trustees and superintendents indicated that each of these latter characteristics are more strongly represented on current school boards than is required.

FIGURE 6

Board Characteristics - Trustees

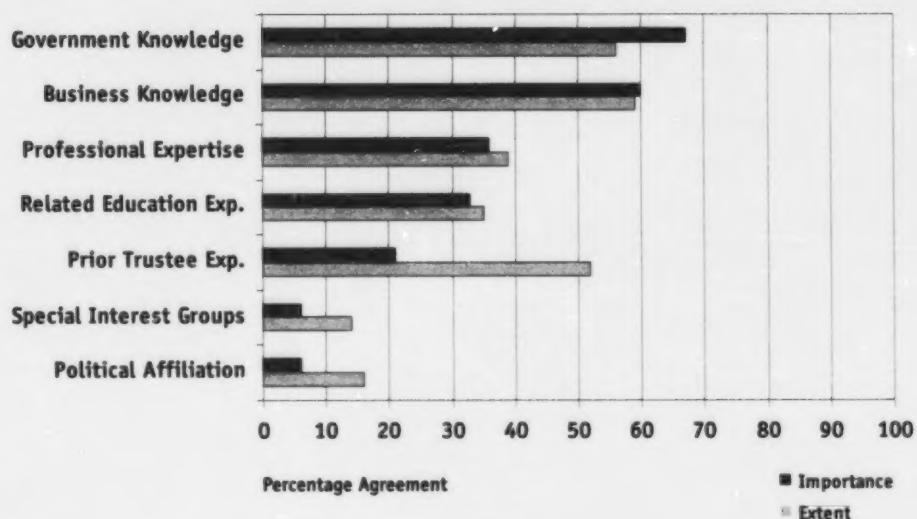
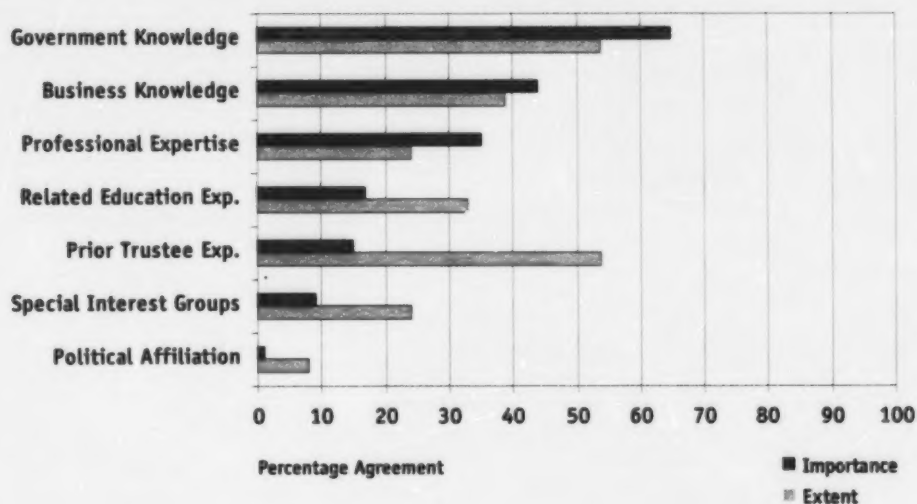


FIGURE 7

Board Characteristics - Superintendents



When asked to rank whose interests they represent on the school board, 9 out of 10 trustees indicated that they primarily represent the interests of the students of their school division/district (see Figure 8). Parents of the division/district and the taxpayers of the community followed as secondary and tertiary interests, respectively. Extremely few trustees indicated that they at all represent the interests of the Minister and the Department of Education & Training.

FIGURE 8

Students	93%
Parents	41%
Taxpayers	39%
Staff/Teachers	19%
Minister/Department of Education & Training	5%
Parent Advisory Councils	3%
Other	2%

ATTRIBUTE 3: BOARD ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES & FUNCTIONS

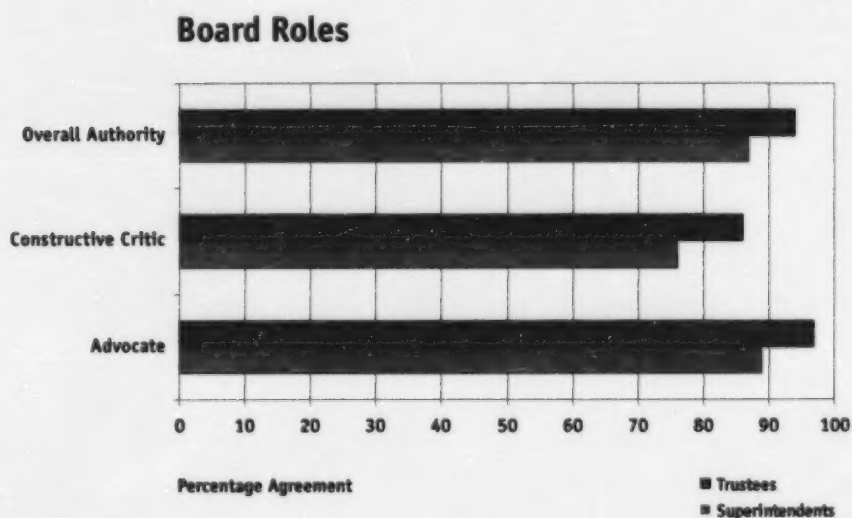
Three primary roles are generally ascribed to a board: that of holding overall authority; that of providing feedback and commentary on the functioning of the organization for which they are responsible; and that of representing and being an advocate of the organization. Each of these board roles has different expectations and functions associated with it, which can require quite different mindsets and behaviours. As what is required in one role may conflict with another, it is important for a board to be clear on which role is being performed at any given time. Trustees and superintendents very strongly agreed that an effective school board needs to be clear on its role and responsibilities.

Our survey explored school board responsibilities in terms of:

- A set of board roles;
- A set of functions associated with each of those roles;
- An assessment of the board's performance of those functions; and
- The perceived manageability of the board job.

As shown in Figure 9, trustees and superintendents strongly agreed that their school boards fulfil the three primary roles of a board.

FIGURE 9



AN EXAMINATION OF SCHOOL BOARD GOVERNANCE IN MANITOBA

Each of these roles have a number of associated functions, as outlined below:

As Ultimate Authority:

- Setting strategic direction and goals of the school division/district.
- Selecting the superintendent.
- Setting significant policies by which the school division/district operates.
- Setting divisional budgets and establishing the property tax mill rate.
- Making all critical business decisions.
- Collective bargaining with local employee groups.
- Adjudicating disputes unresolved through regular practices and protocols.
- Ensuring accountability obligations are discharged.

As Constructive Critic:

- Monitoring achievement of goals and objectives.
- Evaluating the performance of the superintendent.
- Ensuring effective management information systems are in place.

As Advocate:

- Developing a communication plan for stakeholders.
- Bringing an external viewpoint to the school division/district's attention.

Survey respondents were asked to indicate how important each of these functions are to an effective school board, and then to indicate their satisfaction with their school board's performance of these functions. As shown in Figures 10 and 11, trustees and superintendents endorsed most of these functions as important responsibilities of a school board.

- Only three functions received less than 80% agreement by trustees. These were: making all critical business decisions; adjudicating unresolved disputes; and of least importance, bringing an external viewpoint to the division. Less than 80% of superintendents agreed with these particular board functions.
- Superintendents were also less likely than trustees to agree that it is the board's function to develop a communication plan for stakeholders, and to ensure effective management information systems are in place.

FIGURE 10

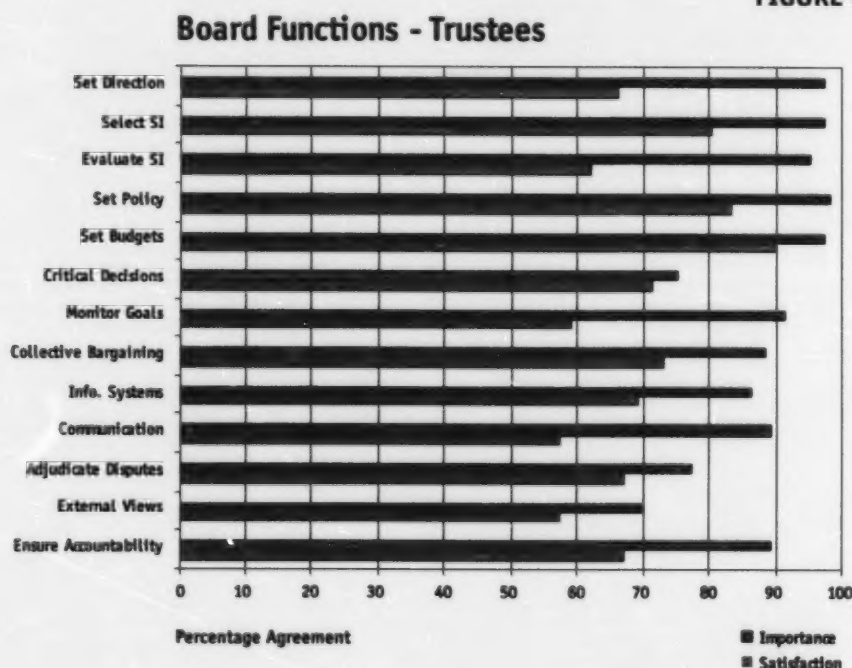
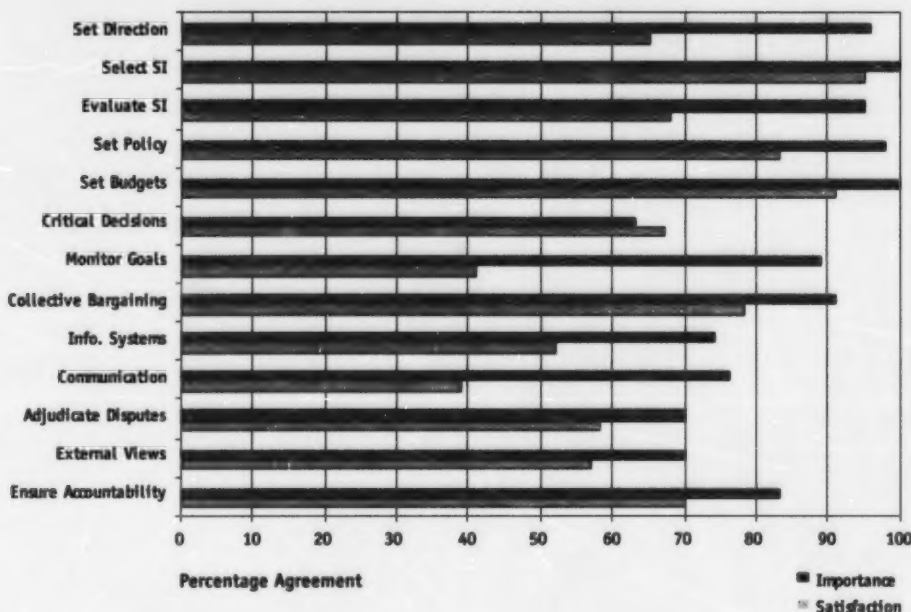


FIGURE 11

Board Functions - Superintendents



When asked to assess their school board's performance on each of these functions, both trustees and superintendents report a performance gap. On almost all functions, both trustees and superintendents self-assessed the effectiveness of their school board's performance as substantially less than the importance they accorded each function.

- Trustees rated their performance highly in: setting budgets and the tax mill rate (90%); setting significant operational policies (83%); and selecting the superintendent (80%). They were least satisfied with their performance in developing communication plans (57%); bringing an external viewpoint to the table (57%) and monitoring the achievement of the division/district's goals and objectives (59%).
- Of interest, is that the largest performance gap was seen to exist in those functions that were deemed to be of most importance: setting strategic direction and goals; monitoring the achievement of those goals; evaluating the performance of the superintendent and developing a communication plan for stakeholders.
- Superintendents concurred with their trustees, rating the school board's performance highly on the same functions, and being critical of performance in the same areas, especially in the board's ability to develop communication plans (39%) and to monitor the achievement of the division/district's goals (41%). Superintendents further identified a performance issue on the board's function of ensuring effective management information systems are in place (52%). Interestingly enough, the function least supported, that of making all critical business decisions, was the only one in which superintendents deemed their board to be more effective than the function was important.

Performing these functions and carrying out their responsibilities - in other words, the board job - is deemed to be a manageable one by both trustees (88%) and superintendents (85%).

- 95% of trustees feel that they have sufficient information as to their duties and responsibilities as a trustee and two-thirds report that their board role has turned out to be consistent with their expectations at the time they were elected.

ATTRIBUTE 4: LEVEL OF COMMITMENT

Effective board governance requires commitment. Members of any board need to commit both individually and as a group to the goals of the organization and the processes set in place for the board to achieve them. Board governance literature often assumes that board members will give to a board all the time and energy that is needed for good governance. This assumption may not accurately reflect that the part-time position of board member may conflict with other salient roles (that of full-time career, wife/husband, parent, etc.). Moreover, it does not recognize the composition of the board as a group, in which some members may not see that their contribution of time and energy makes a difference, and thus, may leave the actual work of governance to others. Trustees and superintendents very strongly agreed that a school board having trustees who are committed to the school division/district is an important attribute for an effective school board.

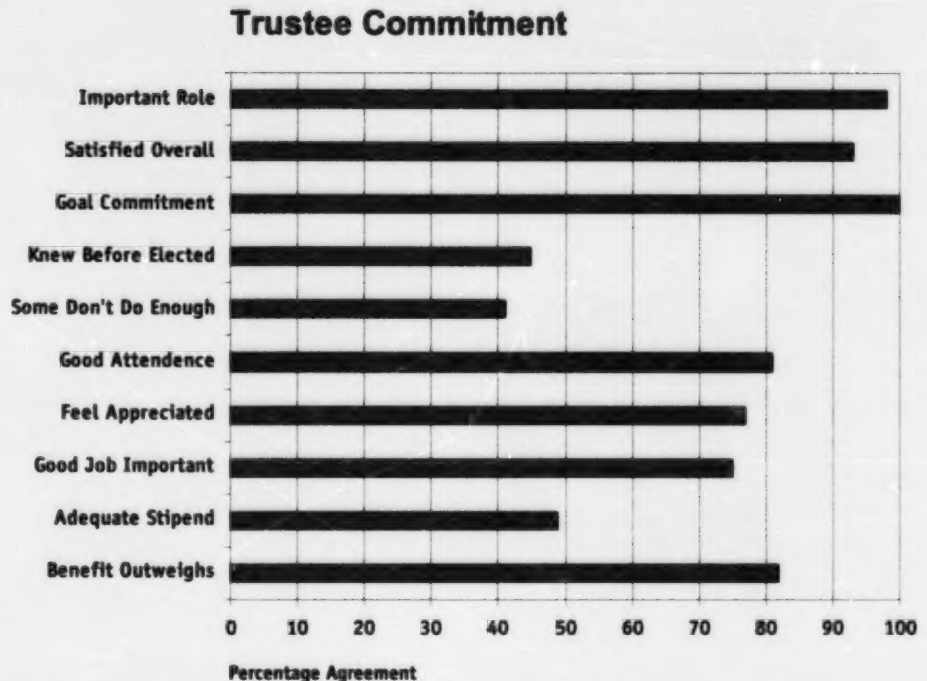
Our survey further explored trustee commitment by assessing:

- The importance of the mandate and goals to trustees;
- Their contribution to the school board; and
- The personal benefits and risks of board involvement.

Trustees in Manitoba are highly committed to their school division/district and care about the school board's contribution to their community. Further, they make a significant contribution of their time and energy to their school board. As shown in Figure 12:

- Trustees value their work on their school board and strongly believe it fulfils an important role in their community. Overall, they are satisfied that their work as a trustee helps to make a positive difference to their community.
- Trustees indicated a high commitment to the goals of their school division/district. This strong commitment likely developed as a result of their participation on the board, as less than half the trustees indicated they knew a lot about the school division/district before being elected.
- While a third of trustees were newly elected two years ago (30%), the majority of trustees have served numerous terms. On average, a trustee in Manitoba has six and a half years of school board experience.
- Trustees devote, on average, 26 hours a month on behalf of the school board, and spend an average of 6 hours preparing for board meetings. Yet, more than 40% of trustees and superintendents feel that there are some trustees on their board who spend less time on their tasks than is required to do an adequate job.
- Trustees and superintendents report that attendance at meetings is not a problem for school boards.

FIGURE 12



Trustees also report that they receive significant benefit from their involvement and contribution to their school board.

- The majority of trustees feel valued and appreciated as a member of their school board. They care about the work of their board and their contribution to it, and most trustees indicated it is important that their fellow trustees view them as doing a good job.
- Less than half the trustees feel the stipend paid to them is adequate for their involvement on their school board. Yet, the majority of trustees indicated that, taking all things into account, the personal rewards of being a trustee have outweighed the personal costs.

ATTRIBUTE 5: INFORMATION FOR DECISION-MAKING

Information is a key contributor to effective board decisions. Board members have a duty to demand and expect quality information, on a timely basis for decision-making. Information is often assumed to be neutral and unbiased; it is not. Information is developed and perceived through particular views and paradigms. It is generally prepared for a specific purpose that needs to be kept in mind when interpreting it. Two major strategies are used to counteract these limitations with information. The first is to involve several people in a decision. Thus, through the various individuals on a board, different perspectives are brought together in decision-making, which balances the sole perspective of any one decision-maker. The second is to have more than one source of information. Multiple sources of information may serve to counteract any distortion that exists in a single source. Trustees and superintendents unanimously endorsed the importance of having appropriate information to make decisions as an attribute of effective school board governance.

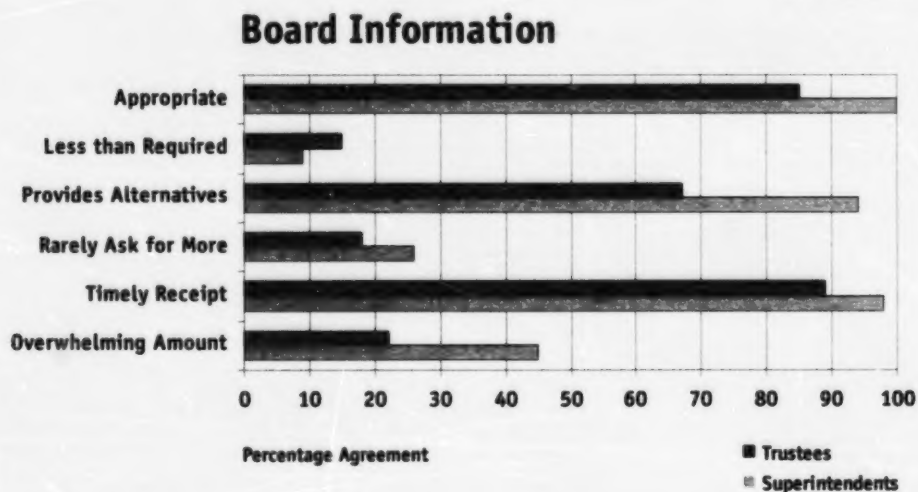
Our survey further explored the school board's information by examining:

- The adequacy and appropriateness of information received for decision-making;
- The usefulness of the information to decision-making; and
- The sources of information.

Trustees report that the information provided to their school board is adequate and appropriate. As shown in Figure 13:

- School boards are presented with the appropriate information for decision-making according to 85% of trustees and all superintendents. Further, trustees and superintendents report that their school board generally receives enough information to do an adequate job; only 15% indicated it did not.
- The information provided to school boards was reported to provide sufficient alternative courses of action from which to select by two-thirds of trustees. Superintendents were much more likely to agree that information provided to the school board provides sufficient alternatives.
- About 70% of trustees indicated that they have asked for information beyond that provided to the board; 60% of superintendents agreed that this occurs. Only 18% of trustees said that they rarely ask for more information.
- The majority of trustees indicated that the material for board meetings is pre-circulated in adequate time. Most trustees also report they are not overwhelmed by the amount of material to be reviewed in preparation for board meetings. Only about one in five trustees (21%) reported that they found the amount of material to be overwhelming.

FIGURE 13



We assessed the quality of information received by school boards by asking trustees and superintendents to indicate whether the information:

- Allows the board to monitor progress according to plans.
- Has an appropriate level of detail.
- Is a complete and fair representation of all facts.
- Is received in a timely manner for effective decision-making.
- Provides an historical perspective.
- Provides a future-oriented perspective.

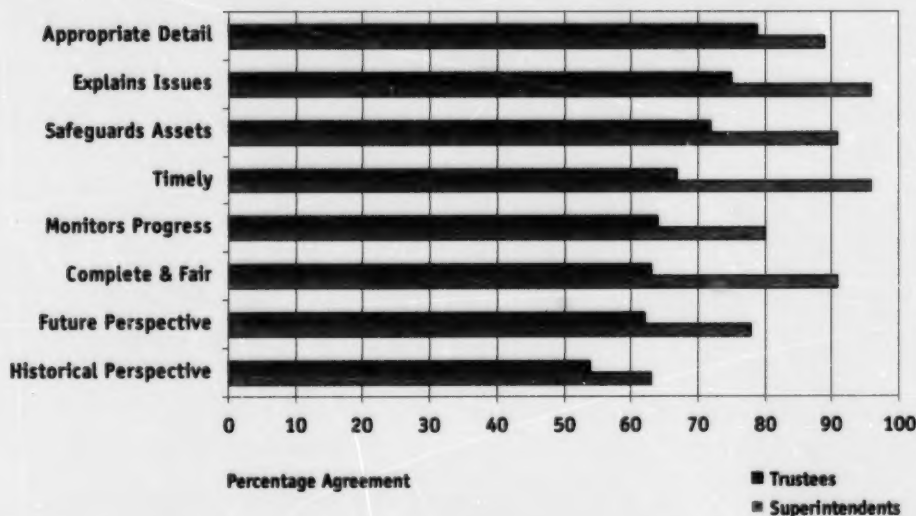
- Explains significant issues, changes, or problems affecting the school division/district.
- Allows the board to safeguard divisional assets.

Trustees and superintendents perceive that the quality of the information provided to their school board supports appropriate decision-making. As shown in Figure 14:

- Trustees were most satisfied that the information they currently receive: has an appropriate level of detail (79%), explains significant issues (75%), and allows them to safeguard divisional assets (72%). They were least satisfied that the information provides enough historical perspective (54%).
- Superintendents assessed the quality of information much more positively than did the trustees. They did agree with trustees that the information was weakest at providing an historical perspective.

FIGURE 14

Characteristics of Information Provided



Sole reliance on internal sources of information was not an issue for Manitoba's school boards.

- Three-quarters of trustees and almost as many superintendents stated that their school boards use external sources to provide information to the board, independent of the administration. The most common sources of external information were noted to come from external auditors, consultants on organizational and educational issues, as well as on building and environmental projects, and legal advisors.
- Only about 1 in 5 trustees reported that there was further information that they would like to receive from their school division/district's administration. The most common information they would like to receive is: more detailed and evaluative information on programs and curriculum; and more information on staffing and employee issues.
- Information provided to school boards from the Department of Education & Training was seen to be somewhat deficient. Only one third of trustees indicated that it was appropriate to their needs and that it was provided on a timely enough basis. Superintendents generally agreed with this assessment. This is discussed in more detail in Attribute #7.

ATTRIBUTE 6: BOARD ORGANIZATION

To do its job effectively, boards need to be well organized with the appropriate structures and processes in place to accomplish its goals. Further, an appropriate board culture, one in which the members feel free to participate and contribute, must be established to ensure the board works well together. Trustees and superintendents strongly endorsed the attribute that a board needs to be well organized to do its work.

We explored the organization of school boards by examining:

- The board's understanding of its job;
- The board culture; and
- The board's processes and structures.

School boards in Manitoba clearly understand their job according to the majority of trustees and superintendents.

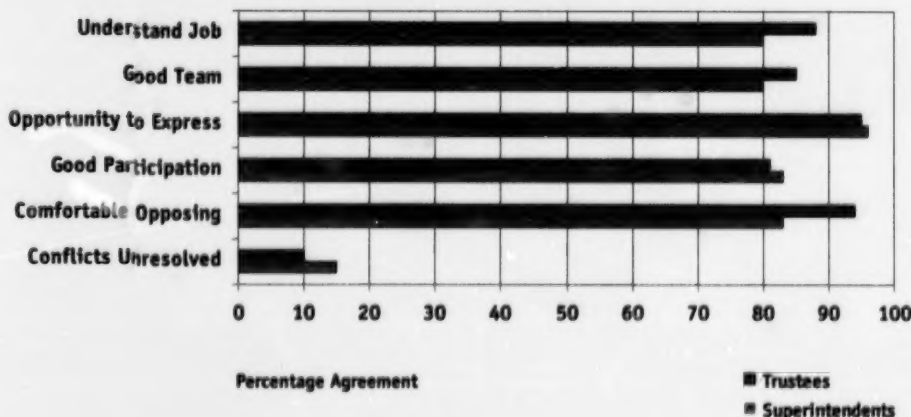
- About 9 in 10 trustees were provided with an orientation when elected to the board. Most trustees report their orientation to have been very or somewhat useful.
- Further, since being elected to the board, 70% of trustees indicate they have been provided with enough developmental and training opportunities to help them do the job required.

Board culture is often defined as the capacity of board members to work well together in order to advance the aim and goals of their organization, or in the case of school boards, their school division/district. As shown in Figure 15, trustees and superintendents perceive the culture of their school boards to be a good one.

- Their boards work well together and are a good team according to 85% of trustees and 80% of superintendents.
- There appears to be no hesitation by trustees in participating in board discussions. Almost all trustees agreed that they have the opportunity to express their views at board meetings and that there is good participation by all board members. Superintendents concurred with this assessment.
- Further, almost all trustees indicated they feel comfortable taking an opposing view from other board members. Even so, most school boards indicated they had no trouble being able to resolve conflicting positions on the board, as only about 10% of trustees felt their board did not do a good job of resolving conflicts.

FIGURE 15

Board Culture

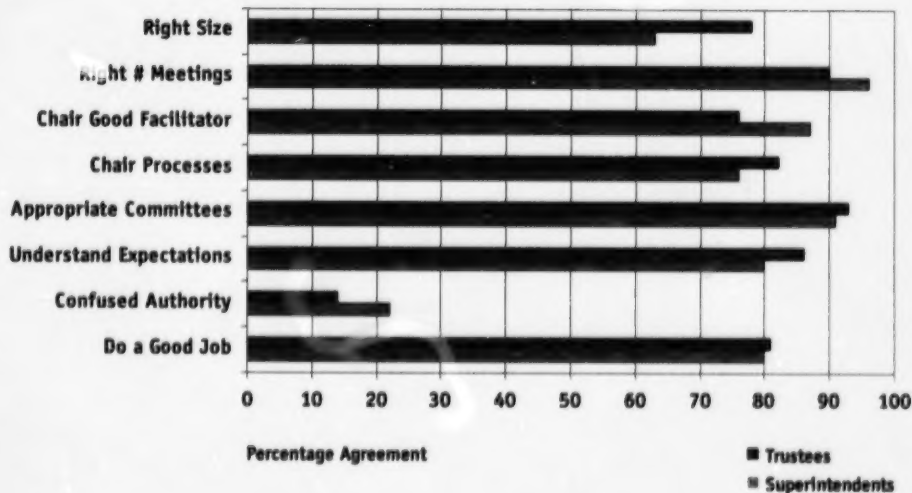


Structurally, trustees and superintendents report that their school boards are well organized to do the job required and that the number of school board meetings held per year is sufficient for their board to be effective. They also indicate that the structure and processes for board committees are working well. As shown in Figure 16:

- Board size was reported to be "about right" by almost 8 out of 10 trustees. Superintendents have a slightly different view, as about one third indicated that their school board is too large. The ideal school board size was stated by both trustees and superintendents to be about 7 to 8 trustees. Most school boards in Manitoba range in size from 5 to 12 trustees.
- The frequency of board meetings is seen to be about right by most trustees; only about 10% would like to see more meetings. Again, superintendents have a somewhat different view — while about three-quarters of superintendents agree the frequency to be about right, almost 20% feel there are too many meetings.
- The chairperson of the board does a good job of facilitating meetings according to 76% of trustees and 87% of superintendents. The current processes in place for selecting/removing the chairperson was seen to be appropriate by 82% of trustees and 76% of superintendents.
- School boards have done a good job of establishing the appropriate board committees according to the majority of trustees and superintendents. Trustees report that in general, each committee understands what is expected of it and there is little confusion between the authority of the board and the authority of the committees. Superintendents were somewhat more reserved on this assessment, with more than 20% indicating that some confusion did exist.
- Overall, 81% of trustees feel that their school board's committees are doing a good job; superintendents agree.
- Parent Advisory Councils have contributed effectively to improving the operational performance of schools, according to most trustees (60%) and superintendents (52%). Further, 78% of trustees and 83% of superintendents indicated that Parent Advisory Councils have not weakened the role of school boards.

FIGURE 16

Board Processes



ATTRIBUTE 7: EXTERNAL RELATIONSHIPS

A board never operates in isolation. While a board is generally independent and autonomous, it is also interdependent with its community and the context within which it operates. There is a need for boards to understand their environment and the other actors, stakeholders, and competitors in the system. Key external relationships for any board includes its clients, its funders, any partnerships or service providers, as well as the public.

Public sector boards are especially impacted by their relationship with government. They may be dependent on government for resources, and may be required to take direction and/or implement policy directives and standards as specified by government. The result can be a complex and often confused relationship. The ultimate authority a public sector board has for its organization can be impacted if its relationship with government is not carefully managed. Balancing this interdependence, with the independence of the board, is a vital aspect of effective board governance in the public sector.

While school boards in Manitoba interact with a wide variety of stakeholders in their school division/district, our survey only assessed their relationship with the provincial government and the Department of Education & Training. It is the key external relationship for school boards and a necessary partner in delivering the public schools program.

Trustees and superintendents agree that an effective school board maintains appropriate external relationships. To explore the relationship between school boards and government, we examined:

- The perceived level of government constraints on school boards;
- The alignment of school boards with government; and
- The communication and co-ordination between the parties.

As shown in Figure 17, trustees and superintendents indicated that the relationship between their school boards and government has generally weakened in recent years. Only 1 in 5 trustees feel that the relationship has improved; superintendents generally concur.

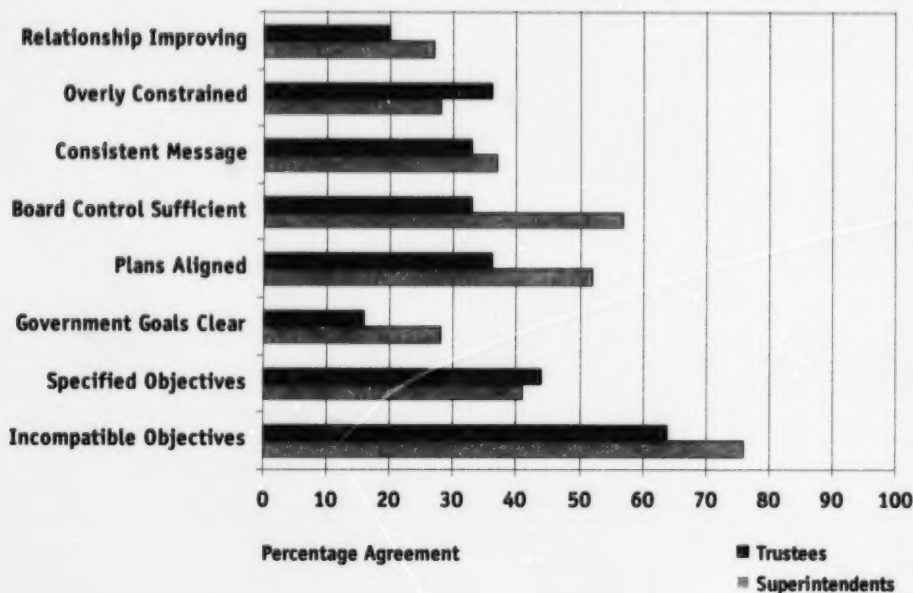
- About one third of trustees indicated that their school board is overly constrained by government legislation and regulations. While about a quarter of

superintendents agreed with the trustees, most (44%) had a different view, indicating that their school board was not overly constrained.

- More than a third of trustees and over half the superintendents do not believe that government has provided their school board with a consistent message about their expectations.
- Trustees do not provide a clear indication of whether school boards have enough control over education in the province. While just over one third of trustees indicated their board did not have enough control, about one third indicated that they did. The remaining trustees were non-committal. Superintendents, however, have a different opinion. They much more strongly agreed that school boards do have sufficient control over education in the province; only 28% said they did not.

FIGURE 17

Relationship with Government



It is clear that improvement can be made in the alignment that exists between the vision and priorities of school boards and those of government.

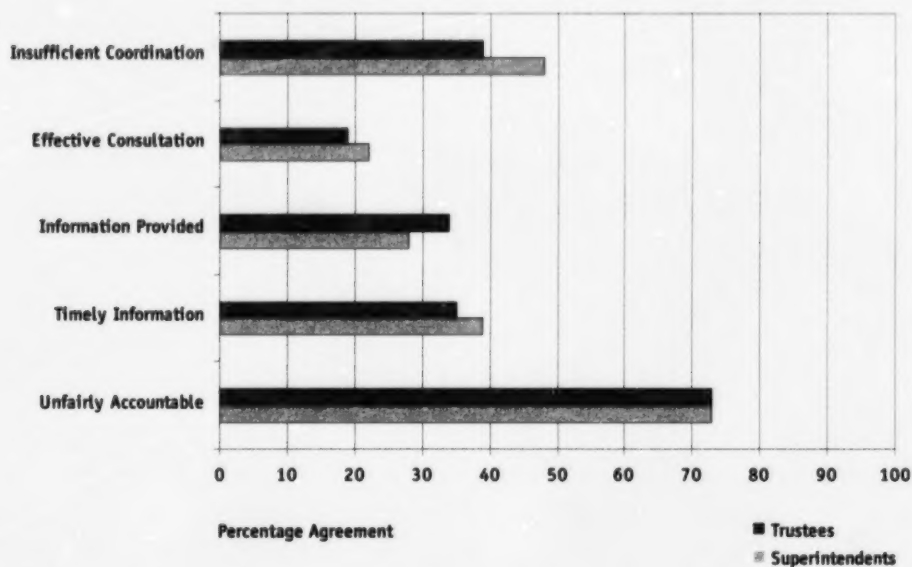
- Only a third of trustees agreed that the vision, mission and operations of their school division/district are aligned with those of government. Superintendents, however, were much more likely to indicate that such alignment does exist.
- When asked if government's long-term goals to improve education were clear to them, only 16% of trustees agreed; 56% of trustees and 61% of superintendents indicated they were not clear.
- Over 40% of trustees and superintendents indicated that the government has identified specific objectives that it expects their school division/district to achieve. However, the majority of trustees and superintendents indicated that the policy initiatives that the government expects their board to undertake are sometimes incompatible with divisional objectives.

Trustees and superintendents indicated that the level of communication and co-ordination between their school boards and government is insufficient and ineffective. As shown in Figure 18:

- Almost 40% of trustees and an even greater number of superintendents indicated that there is insufficient co-ordination between their school board and the Department of Education & Training.
- Government consultation with school boards is ineffective according to more than half the trustees and superintendents; less than 20% of trustees agreed effective consultation occurs.
- As noted previously, information provided to school boards from the Department of Education & Training was seen to be somewhat deficient. Only one third of trustees and even fewer superintendents indicated that it was appropriate to the board's needs. Further, only a third of trustees indicated that the information is provided on a timely enough basis.
- 73% of both trustees and superintendents feel that their school board has been unfairly held accountable for decisions made by the Department of Education & Training and/or other government bodies.

FIGURE 18

Communication with Government



When trustees and superintendents were asked how to improve the relationship between government and their school board, the most common suggestions were:

- *More trust and open communication between the parties; the two should work together on new directions, priorities and restructuring to improve education.*
- *More consultation should occur before government decisions are made and/or announced.*
- *More dialogue needs to occur on funding issues, especially the funding formula and the use of property tax to fund education, as well as issues of rural school funding.*
- *More respect of school board authority required from government; trustees indicated they often feel that their hands are tied.*

*As our survey questionnaire was developed based on a unitary system of administration, only the relationship between the school board and the superintendent was assessed. It should be noted, however, that a small number of school boards in Manitoba have a dual-track system, where the secretary-treasurer also reports directly to the board and is equivalent to the superintendent. Due to the limitations of our survey, the relationship between the board and secretary-treasurer was not assessed in any way. This is not intended to imply that the unitary system is the only, nor the preferred, administrative option for school boards.

ATTRIBUTE 8: INTERNAL RELATIONSHIPS

The relationship between a school board and its superintendent is one of the most important internal relationships for a school board.* The superintendent acts, in most cases, as the main conduit of information between the administration and the board. S/he generally sits at the apex of the administration's management team, and is responsible for implementing the board's decisions. While the trustee's position is part-time and for a specified term, the superintendent's position is full-time, permanent and the source of professional prestige and livelihood. As such, the superintendent is a key contributor to the school division/district's success.

While the board, as ultimate authority, hires and evaluates the superintendent, the superintendent accrues power from his/her greater knowledge of the functioning of the division/district, his/her awareness of its history, and through peer relationships built over time. The board form of governance assumes that, as the board has ultimate authority, any authorities not specifically delegated by the board are retained by the board. If, over time, these residual authorities are perceived to automatically fall to the authority of the superintendent, an erosion in the board form of governance may occur. It is important, therefore, that there be clarity in the allocation and sharing of power and authority between a school board and its superintendent.

Trustees and superintendents strongly agreed that an effective school board needs to define clear relations with its superintendent. We explored this aspect of school board functioning by examining:

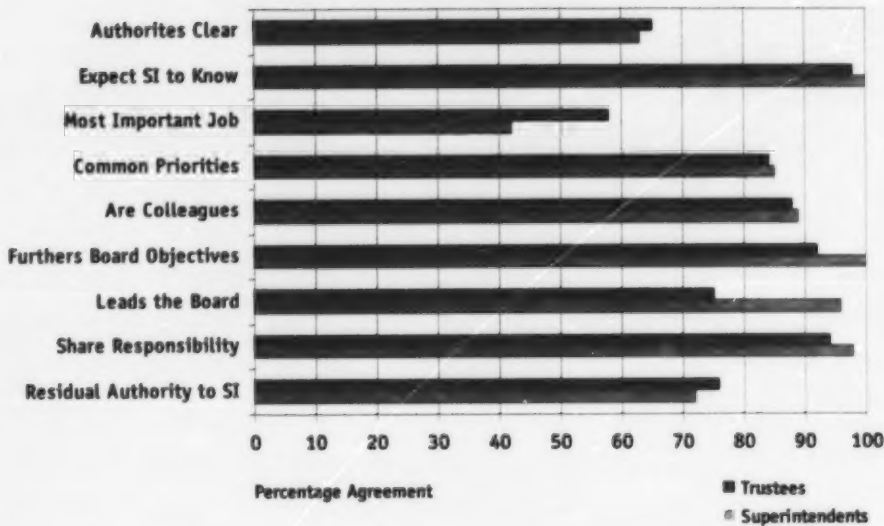
- The role of the superintendent;
- The relationship between the board and superintendent; and
- How authority is shared between the board and its superintendent.

The relationship between school boards and their superintendent is a strong, collegial one. Trustees consider the superintendent's role to be highly important and indicated that the superintendent acts to further the school board's objectives. The lines of authority between school boards and their superintendent have generally been clarified, though some improvement could occur. As shown in Figure 19:

- About two thirds of trustees report that the lines of responsibility between the school board and the superintendent have been clearly delineated; superintendents generally agree. However, some room for improvement does exist, as about one in five trustees and superintendents disagreed with this statement.
- Trustees rely on their superintendent to know what is going on in the school division/district and expect him/her to keep the board informed; superintendents very strongly agree with this role.
- Over half the trustees view the superintendent as having the most important job in the school division/district. Somewhat fewer superintendents agreed that this is the case.
- Trustees and superintendents agree that they share a common view of the school division/district's priorities. Trustees and superintendents further agree that they are colleagues working for the same goals but with different tasks.
- More than 9 out of 10 trustees feel their superintendent acts to further the objectives of the school board; all superintendents agree. Further, three-quarters of trustees and almost all superintendents agreed that, as the centre of leadership responsibility for the school division/district, the superintendent leads the board.

FIGURE 19

Role of the Superintendent



In the working relationship, trustees and superintendents perceive authority to be shared between them.

- The authority accorded to the superintendent was reported to be "about right" by almost 8 out of 10 trustees. Most superintendents agree; only about 1 in 10 would like to have more.
- The vast majority of trustees and superintendents agreed that the superintendent shares responsibility with the board for the school division/district's effectiveness.
- About three-quarters of trustees and superintendents agreed that any authorities not specifically those of the board fall within the authority of the superintendent.

ATTRIBUTE 9: BOARD EFFECTIVENESS & IMPACT

All of the foregoing attributes integrate to create the overall contribution of the school board to its school division/district — the contribution of good governance.

Determining the effectiveness of a board has been the subject of much research. As no objective indicators of effectiveness have been developed, the standard approach is to ask board members to self-assess their perception of board effectiveness. However, the limitation with this approach is that it is strictly a value-judgement made by those directly involved. Research studies have indicated that people, in making such value-judgements of their own effectiveness, are largely overconfident.

To move beyond self-assessments of effectiveness, our Model of Governance looks at how a school board actually impacts, or makes a difference to, the school division/district for which it is responsible. While some board evaluations use policy generation as a measure of impact, we did not feel that this policy perspective provides a unique activity upon which to assess board effectiveness, as many different parts of an organization are involved in the development and implementation of policy. Boards do, however, specifically make decisions. Hence, our Model of Governance defines the school board's service to its division/district as its decisions. The impact of the school board's decisions is deemed to be the desired outcome of the board.

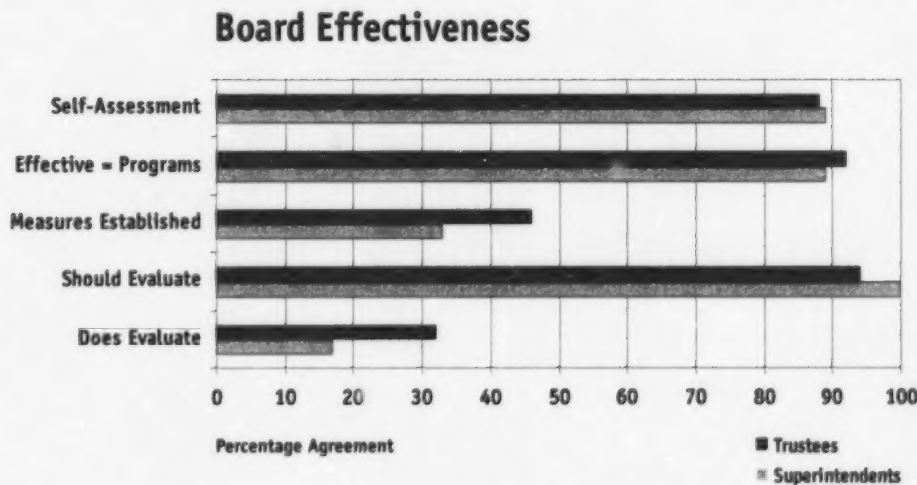
Therefore, we explore the effectiveness of school boards by assessing:

- Board effectiveness as perceived by trustees and superintendents;
- The quality of the board's output – its decision-making; and
- The board's outcome, or extent to which the board did, as necessary, change the recommendations made by the administration.

Trustees and superintendents endorse the principle that school boards should be evaluated on a periodic basis. As shown in Figure 20:

- Perceived effectiveness, as self-assessed by trustees and superintendents, is high. Almost 9 in 10 trustees and superintendents report their school board is carrying out their responsibilities effectively.
- Board effectiveness is not often differentiated from overall organizational effectiveness. As such, a large majority of trustees and superintendents indicated that they feel their school board is effective when the school division/district's programs meet the educational needs of their community.
- Some school boards have established measures to evaluate their effectiveness, according to 46% of trustees. However, about 29% of trustees report that their school board has not established such measures. About 48% of superintendents concurred with these trustees in stating that measures of effectiveness have not been established.
- While both trustees and superintendents strongly agree that board performance should be evaluated on a periodic basis, they did not clearly indicate whether they do provide such an assessment. About one third of trustees reported that board evaluations do occur, one third of trustees indicated they did not occur, and one third were non-committal. Superintendents were more likely to indicate that their school board does not conduct an assessment of effectiveness (54%).

FIGURE 20

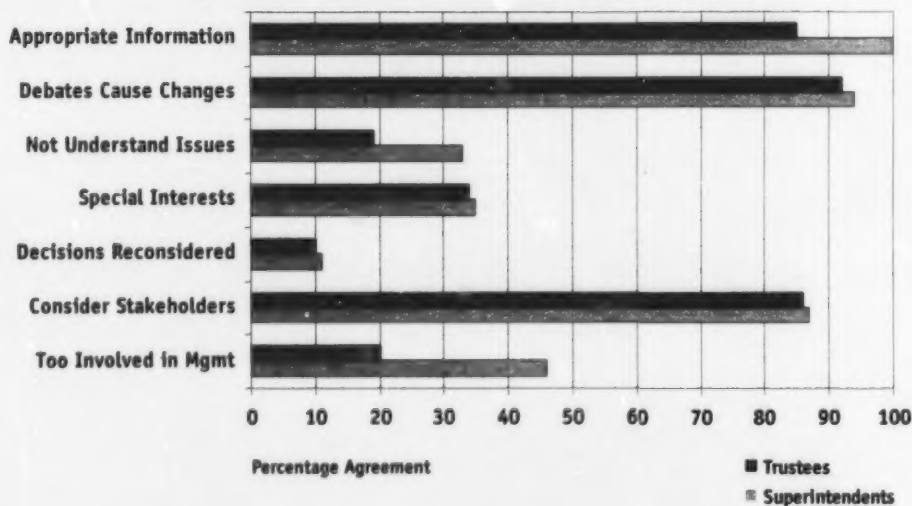


In order to more objectively assess board effectiveness, our survey examined the trustees' perceptions of the quality of their school board's decisions. Trustees and superintendents report that the output of their school board - its decision-making - is productive and efficient. As shown in Figure 21:

- Trustees and superintendents indicate a high quality of decision making. Firstly, they strongly feel that they are provided with the appropriate information to make decisions. Further, the quality of debate on matters before the board is reported to be effective, as 92% of trustees and 94% of superintendents indicated that it may result in changes.
- Trustees do not perceive decision-making on the board to be hampered by members who lack a good understanding of issues. More concern appears to exist with trustees who represent special interests on the board; about one third of trustees and superintendents noted that decision-making is difficult because of this.
- Few trustees and superintendents perceive that board decisions are reconsidered too often.
- The majority of trustees and superintendents indicate that their school boards adequately consider the interests of key stakeholders in making decisions.
- Trustees generally do not feel that their school board becomes too involved in day-to-day management decisions; only about 1 in 5 indicated that an issue may exist. However, superintendents were split on this issue, with 46% indicating their school board does get too involved with management decisions and 41% saying their school board does not.

FIGURE 21

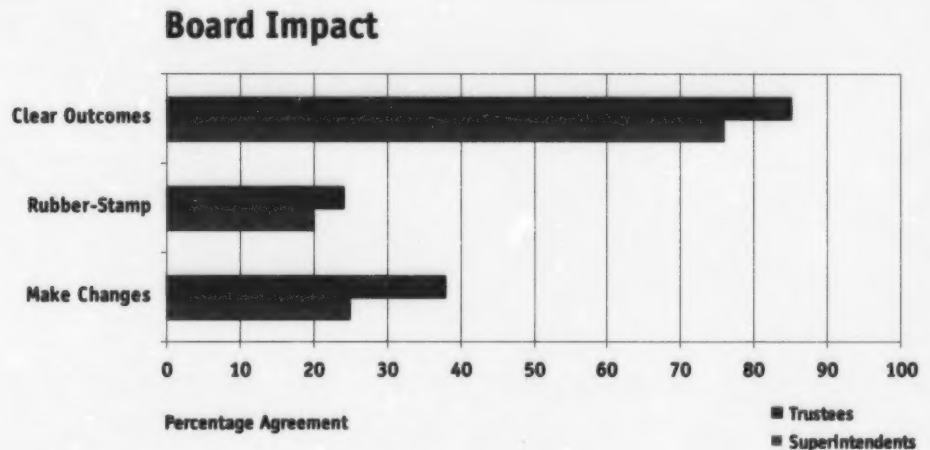
Board Decision-Making



Board outcome is defined as the impact of the board's decisions. As the majority of trustees and superintendents agreed that an effective school board should, as necessary, make changes in the recommendations made to it by the administration, we used this attribute as a proxy measure for board impact. Our survey therefore examined the trustees' perceptions of whether, in fact, their school board has made such changes. As shown in Figure 22:

- The majority of trustees and superintendents indicated that their school board is clear on its desired outcomes for their school division/district.
- About a quarter of trustees and 1 in 5 superintendents feel that their school board often acts as a "rubber-stamp" for conclusions reached by the administration.
- While most trustees and superintendents agreed that an effective board makes changes, as necessary, to the original proposals of the administration, they are not quite as certain that such changes do in fact occur. Only slightly more than a third of trustees and a quarter of superintendents felt that their board has made major changes to the administration's policy recommendations. Another third of trustees disagreed and the remaining third were non-committal. However, superintendents were more definitive in their assessment, as 53% indicated that such changes do not occur.

FIGURE 22



A Closing Commentary

Effective governance in public sector organizations is not something that just magically occurs when board members sit around a table; rather, it takes hard work and sustained effort.

The significant response to our survey and the time taken by many trustees and superintendents to raise additional governance issues indicates the importance they attach to enhancing the effectiveness of school board governance. The survey revealed much that is positive in the operation of school boards and identified a number of areas where further attention is warranted.

The Model of Governance presented in this report outlines a number of attributes for effective governance. However, there is no "one size fits all" solution for effective governance. Rather, the model should simply be used as a basis for board discussions around best practices and solutions that suit each board's unique situation. The result of such efforts is improved organizational effectiveness, and stronger accountability processes. These are key components to ensuring that the citizens of Manitoba are well served by their public institutions.

We hope this report stimulates a vibrant dialogue on enhancing school board governance practices. We encourage all Manitobans interested in our system of public education to contribute to this dialogue and assist trustees, school division/district administrations, as well as the Minister and Department of Education & Training in enhancing the contribution that effective school boards can make to our community. As Provincial Auditor, I look forward to joining in that dialogue.



School Divisions/Districts Included In This Study:**Appendix****A**

Winnipeg School Division #1	Garden Valley School Division #26
St. James-Assiniboia School Division #2	Mountain School Division #28
Assiniboine South School Division #3	Pine Creek School Division #30
St. Boniface School Division #4	Beautiful Plains School Division #31
Fort Garry School Division #5	Turtle River School Division #32
St. Vital School Division #6	Dauphin-Ochre School Division #33
River East School Division #9	Duck Mountain School Division #34
Seven Oaks School Division #10	Swan River School Division #35
Lord Selkirk School Division #11	Intermountain School Division #36
Transcona-Springfield School Division #12	Pelly Trail School Division #37
Agassiz School Division #13	Birdtail River School Division #38
Seine River School Division #14	Rolling River School Division #39
Hanover School Division #15	Brandon School Division #40
Boundary School Division #16	Fort la Bosse School Division #41
Red River School Division #17	Souris Valley School Division #42
Rhineland School Division #18	Antler River School Division #43
Morris-Macdonald School Division #19	Turtle Mountain School Division #44
Whitehorse Plains School Division #20	Kelsey School Division #45
Interlake School Division #21	Flin Flon School Division #46
Evergreen School Division #22	Western School Division #47
Lakeshore School Division #23	Frontier School Division #48
Portage la Prairie School Division #24	Division Scolaire Franco-Manitobaine #49
Midland School Division #25	Prairie Spirit School Division #50

Pine Falls School District #2155	Mystery Lake School District #2355
Churchill School District #2264	Whiteshell School District #2408
Snow Lake School District #2309	Sprague School District #2439
Lynn Lake School District #2312	Leaf Rapids School District #2460

Acknowledgments

A number of people assisted our Office throughout the completion of this report. Their valuable input and considered feedback throughout various stages of this project were immensely appreciated.

- The staff of the Manitoba Association of School Trustees for their interest in this project and assistance in ensuring the factual accuracy of this report.
- Dr. Edward S. Hickcox, Adjunct Professor, Department of Educational Administration, Foundations and Psychology, Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba for his background research and assistance in questionnaire design.
- Peter Ogrodinik for his graduate research paper, prepared for our Office, entitled, *Educational Governance in a Changing Policy Environment: Implications for School Boards in Manitoba*, which provided useful background information for this report.
- Useful background information was also taken from the *Final Report and Recommendations of the Manitoba School Divisions/Districts Boundaries Review Commission*, William Norrie, Q.C., Chairman, November 1994.
- The trustees of Agassiz School Division for pretesting the survey questionnaire and providing valuable commentary and feedback.

We would also like to acknowledge the contribution of our colleague, the late Dr. Isobel Garvie, whose work in the field of board governance provided the basis for this report and led to the development of our Model of Governance.

Appendix

B



Data Tables

Statements are listed in the following data tables as they appeared on the Trustee questionnaire. Some statements were not asked and/or reworded on the Superintendent questionnaire.

Note that percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

OUR MODEL OF GOVERNANCE

Statement	Trustee	Superintendent	Not Asked	Not Asked	Not Asked	Not Asked	Not Asked	Not Asked
Clearly understand the School Division/District's goals.	4.6	4.7	-	2	98	2	2	96
Set agreed upon priorities for the Board.	4.5	4.5	-	4	96	2	-	98
Be accountable for the effectiveness of the School Division/District.	4.5	4.5	-	4	97	2	2	96
Be clear on who it is the Board represents.	4.5	4.3	-	4	96	4	7	89
Be clear on Board responsibilities.	4.6	4.5	-	<1	99	2	2	96
Have Trustees who are committed to the School Division/District.	4.7	4.7	-	2	99	2	-	98
Have the appropriate information to make decisions.	4.8	4.7	-	<1	100	2	-	98
Be organized as a Board.	4.6	4.4	-	2	97	4	4	92
Maintain appropriate linkages with external organizations.	4.2	4.0	1	12	87	2	20	78
Define clear relations with the SI.	4.6	4.5	-	<1	100	2	2	96
Make policy decisions for the School Division/District.	4.7	4.5	<1	1	99	4	-	96
As necessary, change the recommendations made to the Board by the administration.	4.2	4.0	2	12	85	4	9	87

Statement	Trustee	Superintendent	Not Asked	Not Asked	Not Asked	Not Asked	Not Asked	Not Asked
I would define School Board governance as Trustees working together to set direction and be accountable for a School Division/District.	4.6	4.7	1	1	98	-	-	100
As a Trustee, my governance activity fulfils an important role in the community.	4.4	-	1	1	98	n/a	n/a	n/a
As a School Trustee, I have a fiduciary responsibility to manage resources effectively in order to achieve the desired aim	4.4	4.3	1	4	93	2	2	96
Overall, I am satisfied that my governance activity makes a positive difference to my community	4.2	-	3	4	93	n/a	n/a	n/a

Appendix

C

AN EXAMINATION OF SCHOOL BOARD GOVERNANCE IN MANITOBA

ATTRIBUTE #1: PURPOSE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
This Board understands the School Division/District's goals.	4.2	4.1	5	9	88	7	4	88
This Board and its SI share a common view of the School Division/District's priorities.	4.1	4.1	9	7	84	9	7	85
This Board has clear priorities for itself in leading this School Division/District.	4.1	4.1	8	8	84	11	9	80
The priorities of this Board shift as new Trustees are elected.	3.1	3.5	33	26	39	26	17	58
This Board discusses the fundamental goals of the School Division/District.	4.0	3.9	10	7	82	15	7	78
The goals of this School Division/District are important to me.	4.8	4.8	-	<1	100	-	-	100

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
This Board is accountable for the actions of the School Division/District.	4.4	4.1	2	4	94	9	4	87
As a Board, we feel accountable to a large number of external groups who have conflicting views.	3.5	3.9	21	25	53	11	15	74
I feel this Board does an adequate job of reporting divisional performance.	3.9	3.6	11	12	77	15	20	66
It is clear to me to whom this Board is accountable.	4.4	4.2	2	4	94	2	13	85
The information this Board provides to the public and to government allows an evaluation of divisional performance.	3.8	3.4	10	19	69	22	17	61
This Board ensures that accountability information is understandable.	3.9	3.9	5	15	79	4	11	84
Our published information is subject to audit or review.	4.0	3.7	4	19	75	11	17	72
The Board approves all accountability information that is published, including the annual report.	4.2	3.9	5	5	88	9	18	78
There are clearly defined expectations between the Department of Education and this Board.	3.5	3.4	17	27	53	26	13	60
This Board has been held accountable for decisions made by the Department of Education, Training or other government bodies.	3.8	3.7	7	18	73	9	18	73
This Board identifies annually specific performance goals that it expects the School Division/District to achieve.	3.9	3.3	10	14	77	28	26	46
This Board does a good job of identifying and assessing the risks involved in meeting operational goals.	4.1	3.5	6	13	80	22	15	63
Our Board has the authorities required to operate the School Division/District effectively.	3.9	3.9	8	6	84	12	12	77

ATTRIBUTE #2: RATIONALE AND LINK TO COMMUNITY

Board Characteristics - Trustees	Mean		Response			Total		
			Strongly Disagree	Neutral	Agree/ Strongly	Strongly Disagree	Neutral	Agree/ Strongly
	T	SD	%			%		
Knowledge of government	3.7	3.5	10	23	67	10	34	56
Prior School Board experience	2.5	3.5	50	29	21	18	28	52
Related experience in education	2.9	3.1	36	30	33	24	39	35
Known political affiliation	1.5	2.1	87	7	6	65	18	16
Professional expertise (legal, financial, etc.)	3.1	3.1	26	37	36	24	36	39
General business knowledge	3.5	3.6	11	29	60	11	29	59
Represent special interest groups	1.7	2.2	78	16	6	61	23	14

Board Characteristics - Superintendents	Mean		Response			Total		
			Strongly Disagree	Neutral	Agree/ Strongly	Strongly Disagree	Neutral	Agree/ Strongly
	T	SD	%			%		
Knowledge of government	3.7	3.5	9	26	65	19	26	54
Prior School Board experience	2.5	3.4	57	28	15	26	20	54
Related experience in education	2.5	2.9	55	28	17	35	31	33
Known political affiliation	1.3	1.9	96	4	1	72	20	9
Professional expertise (legal, financial, etc.)	2.9	2.9	36	29	36	37	39	24
General business knowledge	3.3	3.2	22	35	44	22	39	39
Represent special interest groups	1.8	2.5	78	13	9	56	20	24

Statement	Mean		Trustees (T)			Superintendents (SD)		
			Strongly Disagree	Neutral	Agree/ Strongly	Strongly Disagree	Neutral	Agree/ Strongly
	T	SD	%			%		
As a Trustee, I am expected to reflect the values and priorities of the community from which I was elected.	4.3	4.0	3	5	91	7	15	78
This Board has clarified the values and principles that guide our decisions.	3.9	3.7	7	15	77	17	13	70

AN EXAMINATION OF SCHOOL BOARD GOVERNANCE IN MANITOBA

ATTRIBUTE #3: BOARD ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND FUNCTIONS

Statement	Mean		Standard Deviation		Frequency		Percentage	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
This School Board has a manageable job.	4.0	3.9	5	5	88	6	9	85
As a Trustee, I am an advocate for this School Division/District.	4.8	4.3	<1	2	97	2	9	89
As a Trustee, I provide constructive appraisal of the School Division/District's operations.	4.0	3.7	2	11	86	17	7	76
I have sufficient information as to my duties and personal responsibilities as a Trustee on this School Board.	4.2	-	4	2	95	n/a	n/a	n/a
My Board role is consistent with my expectations at the time I was elected.	3.7	-	15	19	66	n/a	n/a	n/a

Board Functions - Trustees	Mean		Standard Deviation		Frequency		Percentage	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Setting strategic direction and goals.	4.7	3.8	<1	2	97	7	26	66
Selecting the SI.	4.9	4.3	<1	1	97	5	10	80
Evaluating performance of the SI.	4.6	3.7	1	2	95	18	17	62
Selecting and evaluating performance of the Secretary/Treasurer (dual-track Division only).	4.6	3.8	-	3	96	14	18	68
Setting significant policies by which the School Division/District operates.	4.7	4.1	-	2	98	4	13	83
Setting divisional budgets and establishing the property tax mill rate.	4.8	4.4	-	2	97	2	7	90
Making all critical business decisions.	4.1	3.9	8	15	75	8	19	71
Monitoring achievement of goals and objectives.	4.4	3.6	2	6	91	10	30	59
Collective bargaining with local employee groups.	4.4	4.0	2	9	88	7	20	73
Ensuring effective management information systems are in place.	4.3	3.8	2	11	86	7	22	69
Developing a communication plan for the various stakeholders.	4.3	3.6	1	9	89	10	32	57
Adjudicating disputes unresolved through regular practices and protocols.	4.1	3.8	2	19	77	7	24	67
Bringing an external viewpoint to the School Division/District's attention.	4.0	3.6	4	24	70	10	30	57
Ensuring accountability obligations are discharged.	4.3	3.8	2	9	89	6	23	67

AN EXAMINATION OF SCHOOL BOARD GOVERNANCE IN MANITOBA

ATTRIBUTE #3: BOARD ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND FUNCTIONS (CONT'D.)

Board Functions - Responsibilities	Overall		Trustees		Superintendents		School Divisions/Districts	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Setting strategic direction and goals.	4.6	3.6	-	4	96	17	17	65
Selecting the SI.	4.9	4.4	-	-	100	2	2	95
Evaluating performance of the SI.	4.8	3.7	-	5	95	13	18	68
Selecting and evaluating performance of the Secretary/Treasurer (dual-track Division only).	4.6	3.3	-	5	95	30	20	50
Setting significant policies by which the School Division/District operates.	4.7	4.0	2	-	98	9	9	81
Setting divisional budgets and establishing the property tax mill rate.	4.8	4.5	-	-	100	4	4	91
Making all critical business decisions.	3.7	3.8	20	17	63	9	24	67
Monitoring achievement of goals and objectives.	4.2	3.2	-	11	89	22	37	41
Collective bargaining with local employee groups.	4.4	4.0	2	7	91	9	13	78
Ensuring effective management information systems are in place.	4.6	3.7	7	28	74	11	37	52
Developing a communication plan for the various stakeholders.	3.9	3.3	7	17	76	22	35	39
Adjudicating disputes unresolved through regular practices and protocols.	3.7	3.6	13	17	70	4	38	58
Bringing an external viewpoint to the School Division/District's attention.	3.8	3.5	9	22	70	17	26	57
Ensuring accountability obligations are discharged.	4.2	3.8	-	17	83	11	20	70

ATTRIBUTE #4: LEVEL OF COMMITMENT

Personal Issues	Overall		Trustees		Superintendents		School Divisions/Districts	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
There are Trustees on this Board who spend less time on their tasks than is required to do an adequate job.	3.1	3.1	34	23	41	42	13	44
It is important to me to be viewed by the other Trustees as doing a good job.	3.9	-	5	20	75	n/a	n/a	n/a
I feel appreciated/valued as a Trustee on this Board.	3.8	-	12	12	77	n/a	n/a	n/a
Taking all things into account, I feel the personal rewards I have received from being a Trustee on this Board outweigh the costs.	4.0	-	8	9	82	n/a	n/a	n/a
I feel I have a full understanding of my legal responsibilities and liabilities as a School Trustee.	3.9	-	10	8	81	n/a	n/a	n/a
I feel the stipend received for my involvement on this Board is adequate.	3.2	-	29	28	49	n/a	n/a	n/a
I knew a lot about this School Division/District before being elected to this Board.	3.1	-	37	17	45	n/a	n/a	n/a
Attendance of Trustees at Board meetings is a problem for this School Board.	1.9	1.7	81	7	11	87	2	11

AN EXAMINATION OF SCHOOL BOARD GOVERNANCE IN MANITOBA

ATTRIBUTE #5: INFORMATION FOR DECISION-MAKING

I am overwhelmed by the amount of material I need to review before Board meetings.	2.7	3.2	50	28	22	38	18	45
Material required for the Board meeting is pre-circulated to Trustees in adequate time.	4.2	4.5	7	4	89	2	-	98
In making decisions, I am provided with sufficient alternative courses of action from which to select.	3.7	4.2	14	18	87	-	7	94
This Board is presented with the appropriate information for decision-making.	4.1	4.6	8	7	88	-	-	100
I rarely ask for information beyond that provided to the Board.	2.3	2.6	70	12	18	61	13	26
Overall, this Board receives less information than is needed to do an adequate job.	2.5	2.1	58	25	15	74	17	9
Information currently provided to the Board:								
- Allows the Board to monitor its progress according to plans.	3.6	3.8	9	25	64	7	13	80
- Has an appropriate level of detail.	3.8	3.9	5	16	79	4	7	89
- Is a complete and fair representation of all facts.	3.6	4.0	12	25	63	2	7	91
- Is received in a timely manner for effective decision-making.	3.7	4.1	13	19	87	-	4	96
- Gives a historical perspective.	3.4	3.6	16	29	54	15	22	63
- Gives a future-oriented perspective.	3.6	3.8	12	25	62	6	15	78
- Explains significant issues, changes, or problems that affect the School Division/District.	3.8	4.2	8	15	75	-	4	96
- Allows the Board to safeguard divisional assets.	3.8	4.1	6	20	72	2	7	91
The Department of Education provides appropriate information for this Board to do an adequate job.	3.0	3.1	30	34	34	28	44	28
The Board receives information from the Department of Education on a timely basis.	3.0	2.8	33	30	35	48	13	39

AN EXAMINATION OF SCHOOL BOARD GOVERNANCE IN MANITOBA

ATTRIBUTE #6: BOARD ORGANIZATION

CULTURE								
This Board understands its job.	4.1	3.9	7	5	88	11	9	80
Overall, this Board works well together as a team.	4.2	4.1	8	8	85	7	13	80
This Board is unable to resolve conflicting positions.	2.1	2.2	77	13	10	78	7	15
All Trustees have the opportunity to express their views at Board meetings.	4.5	4.5	3	2	95	4	-	96
Most Trustees participate in the discussion at Board meetings.	3.9	4.0	11	8	81	11	7	83
I feel comfortable taking an opposing view from others at a Board meeting.	4.2	4.0	4	2	94	13	4	83
COMMITTEES								
Our Board has established the appropriate committees.	4.3	4.1	4	3	93	9	-	91
There is some confusion between the authority of the Board and the authority of committees.	2.2	2.4	76	18	14	74	4	22
Each of the committees understands what is expected of it.	4.1	4.0	5	10	80	6	13	80
Each committee does a good job of carrying out its responsibilities.	3.9	3.8	6	13	81	11	9	80
CHAIR								
The Chairperson does a good job of facilitating the board.	4.0	4.2	12	12	76	11	2	87
The process in place for selecting and changing the Chairperson is appropriate.	4.0	3.9	10	8	82	15	9	76
MEETINGS								
The number of Board meetings held per year is sufficient for this Board to be effective.	4.2	4.4	9	1	90	4	-	96
TRAINING								
As a Trustee, I feel I have been provided with enough developmental and training opportunities to help me do the job required.	3.7	3.5	17	13	70	22	11	67
I feel the pace of change in the education system has been too rapid.	3.2	3.1	31	24	45	41	17	41
I am confident that the education system in Manitoba is improving and will continue to do so.	3.5	3.9	16	26	58	7	9	84

AN EXAMINATION OF SCHOOL BOARD GOVERNANCE IN MANITOBA

ATTRIBUTE #7: EXTERNAL RELATIONSHIPS

	3.2	2.9	24	38	36	41	30	28
I feel our School Board is overly constrained by government legislation and/or regulation.	3.2	2.9	24	38	36	41	30	28
The Department of Education/Training provides this Board with a consistent message about government expectations.	3.0	2.8	39	27	33	51	13	37
The vision, mission, and operations of this School Division/District are aligned with those of government.	3.2	3.3	19	43	36	22	26	52
This Board has been held accountable for decisions made by the Department of Education/Training or other government bodies.	3.8	3.7	7	18	73	9	18	73
There is insufficient co-ordination between this Board and the Dept of Education/Training.	3.2	3.2	26	33	39	30	22	48
The government has identified specific objectives that it expects this School Division/District to achieve.	3.3	3.0	21	33	44	37	22	41
Sometimes, the public policy initiatives that the government expects the Board to undertake are not compatible with divisional objectives.	3.7	4.0	6	28	64	2	22	78
There is effective consultation between government and School Boards.	2.6	2.5	54	26	19	57	22	22
The Department of Education provides the appropriate information for this Board to do an adequate job.	3.0	3.1	30	34	34	26	46	28
The Board receives information from the Department of Education on a timely basis.	3.0	2.8	33	30	35	48	13	38
In general, School Boards have sufficient control over education in Manitoba.	3.0	3.3	41	24	33	28	15	57
The relationship between government and School Boards has generally improved in recent years.	2.8	2.7	36	42	20	44	29	27
The government's long-term goals to improve education are clear to me.	2.5	2.6	56	29	16	61	11	28
Parent Advisory Councils have contributed effectively to improving the operational performance of schools.	3.6	3.2	15	24	60	30	17	52
Parent Advisory Councils have weakened the role of the School Board.	2.0	2.1	78	16	6	83	13	4
I believe our Board adequately considers the interests of key stakeholders in making its decisions.	4.0	4.1	7	7	86	2	11	87

AN EXAMINATION OF SCHOOL BOARD GOVERNANCE IN MANITOBA

ATTRIBUTE #8: INTERNAL RELATIONSHIPS

Statement	Mean		Response (7)			Response (8)		
			Strongly Agree	Agree	Agree/Disagree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Agree/Disagree
	1	2	%			%		
The lines of responsibility between this Board and the SI have been clearly delineated.	3.6	3.5	18	15	65	22	15	63
The SI acts to further the objectives of the Board.	4.3	4.6	5	3	92	-	-	100
This Board and the SI are colleagues working for the same goal but with different tasks.	4.3	4.3	6	6	88	7	4	89
Any authorities not specifically those of the Board fall within the authority of the SI.	3.9	3.8	8	14	76	17	11	72
I expect the SI to know what is going on at the School Division/District and to be able to tell me.	4.6	4.8	1	1	98	-	-	100
The job of the SI is the most important of the School Division/District.	3.6	3.1	21	19	58	40	18	42
The SI shares responsibility with the Board for the School Division/District's effectiveness.	4.3	4.5	3	3	94	-	2	98
This Board and its SI share a common view of the School Division/District's priorities.	4.1	4.0	9	7	84	9	7	85
The SI provides leadership to the Board.	3.9	4.3	12	11	75	-	4	96

ATTRIBUTE #9: BOARD EFFECTIVENESS

Board Effectiveness	Mean		Response (7)			Response (8)		
			Strongly Agree	Agree	Agree/Disagree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Agree/Disagree
	1	2	%			%		
I believe this Board is carrying out its responsibility effectively.	4.1	4.1	7	5	88	7	4	89
The SI shares responsibility with the Board for the School Division/District's effectiveness.	4.3	4.5	3	3	94	-	2	98
This Board has established measures that evaluate the effectiveness of the Board as a whole.	3.2	2.8	29	23	46	48	20	33
On a periodic basis, our Board provides an assessment of its effectiveness to the Minister of Education.	3.2	2.5	27	39	32	54	28	17
I believe this Board is effective when the School Division/District's programs meet the educational needs of the community.	4.4	4.2	2	5	92	2	9	89
Board performance should be evaluated on a periodic basis.	4.3	4.1	2	3	94	-	-	100

AN EXAMINATION OF SCHOOL BOARD GOVERNANCE IN MANITOBA

ATTRIBUTE #9: BOARD EFFECTIVENESS (CONT'D.)

	2.2	2.3	74	35	10	78	11	11
Decisions made by this Board are reconsidered too often.	2.2	2.3	74	35	10	78	11	11
This Board is presented with the appropriate information for decision-making.	4.1	4.6	8	7	85	-	-	100
This Board becomes too involved with day-to-day management decisions.	2.5	3.2	82	18	20	41	13	46
Debates on matters before the Board may result in changes to the original proposal.	4.1	4.2	2	6	92	-	7	94
Decision-making is difficult because some Trustees represent special interests.	2.9	3.0	47	19	34	48	17	35
Decision-making is difficult because some Trustees do not understand the School Division/District and the issues facing it.	2.5	2.8	65	15	19	50	17	33
I believe our Board adequately considers the interests of key stakeholders in making its decisions.	4.0	4.1	7	7	86	2	11	87

	3.1	2.7	30	32	38	53	22	25
This Board has made major changes in the policy recommendations of the administration.	3.1	2.7	30	32	38	53	22	25
This Board is clear on its desired outcomes for the School Division/District.	4.1	3.9	6	9	85	7	17	78
This Board often acts as a "rubber-stamp" for conclusions reached by the administration.	2.8	2.5	66	15	24	59	22	20

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